

Iraq boosts forces at Turkey border

ANKARA (AP) — A Turkish politician on Sunday said Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein told him Iraq increased its forces along its border with Turkey in response to Ankara's request for NATO air units, the semi-official news agency Anadolu reported. Erdal Inonu, leader of the main opposition Social Democrat Populist Party, told a news conference in Baghdad after his meeting with Saddam that the Iraqi leader also expressed disappointment about a recent reinforcement of Turkish forces at the border, Anadolu said. During the two-hour meeting, Saddam said that the latest Turkish military moves were imposed by the United States, according to Inonu. "Why is Turkey massing troops to the Iraqi border? Is it going to attack us? We are friends and close friends with Turkey for 70 years," Saddam was quoted as saying. Saddam also said Iraq had no intention to attack Turkey nor any ambitions towards Turkish territory. Meanwhile, the Istanbul daily Hurriyet reported on Sunday that the Turkish armed forces would go on alert starting on Jan. 2. Hurriyet said several air units, including F-16, F-1 and F-5 fighters, were in the process of being transferred to four military air bases in the southeast from the western central Anatolian air bases.

Jordan Times

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'U.S. policy too closely tied to Gorbachev'

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. Senate Democratic leader George Mitchell said Sunday that the United States had tied its Soviet policy too closely to the fate of President Mikhail Gorbachev. "Gorbachev is, of course, an historic figure. But there has been an enormous personalisation of American policy almost to the degree that it's as though he's going to be there forever, which we know he is not," the Maine Democrat said in an interview on U.S. television. Mitchell said ominous signs had emerged from the Soviet Union in the last few days, and said the possibility of a return to dictatorial rule seemed to be rising. Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze abruptly resigned on Thursday with an impassioned warning that "reactionaries" threatened the Soviet Union with dictatorship. Mitchell said the United States should continue to send substantial aid to Moscow "unless and until a crackdown occurs. But I don't think we should be providing any foreign assistance if there is a crackdown and a return to authoritarian rule." Referring to Gorbachev, Mitchell said: "I think we should be supportive; we certainly should be grateful for all he's done. But I think our policy ought not be as highly personal as it has been."

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French minister cancels Saudi talks

PARIS (R) — Defence Minister Jean-Pierre Chevenement, visiting French forces in Saudi Arabia, cancelled a meeting with his Saudi counterpart Sunday after local authorities banned two Christmas rock concerts for French troops, military sources said. "The minister's decision (to cancel the meeting) was not unrelated to the intransigence of the Saudi authorities," a senior military source said in Paris. Chevenement, who arrived in Riyadh on Sunday, was due to meet Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz before spending Christmas with French forces whose strength is expected to reach 10,000 men soon. The French army said Saturday it had cancelled the concerts at the request of the Saudi authorities, but French military sources later said talks were under way aimed at relieving one concern.

Germans advised against visit

BONN (R) — Germany warned its nationals on Sunday not to travel to any country bordering Iraq, noting the United Nations deadline of Jan. 15, after which force may be used to oust Iraq from Kuwait. A Foreign Ministry spokesman said travel agents had been instructed to draw clients' attention to the situation in the Middle East, "especially concerning Jan. 15." He said many Germans who live in Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia came home for Christmas and were expected to stay.

Chad wants to try Habre

NDJAMENA (R) — Chad is seeking the extradition of former President Hissene Habre, who sought asylum in Senegal after fleeing his country four weeks ago to escape rebels advancing on the capital. "The state council has begun moves to extradite former President Hissene Habre from Dakar in Senegal in order to bring him to justice," government spokesman Mahamat Salem said. Chad's new government has said it will set up a special criminal court to try Habre, accused by human rights groups of ordering the torture and killing of hundreds of political prisoners during his nine-year rule.

Veteran Haaretz editor dies

TEL AVIV (AP) — Gershon Gustav Schocken, the veteran editor of the respected Israeli daily Haaretz and one of the country's most acclaimed journalists, has died of a prolonged illness. He was 78. Schocken died Saturday morning at Shiba hospital in Tel Aviv of what Haaretz described as a "malignant disease" diagnosed a year ago. Schocken was born in September 1912 in Zwickau, Germany, and was the eldest son of Shlomo Salomon Schocken, a businessman and art collector who established the Schocken publishing houses.

Rich Arabs suffer overeating problems

MUSCAT (AP) — Rich Gulf Arabs eat too much, say doctors fighting what they term "malnutrition of the affluent," the official English-language Observer reported Sunday. The daily quoted Health Department Preventive Medicine Director General Ahmad Al Ghassani as saying "over-eating is becoming a real problem in Oman as in the rest of the Gulf. Malnutrition of the affluent is a condition caused by a lifestyle in which rich and excessive food is consumed without attention to dietary needs. We have to tell people malnutrition, notwithstanding how it is caused, could lead to a host of serious diseases." Ghassani was addressing health service medical staff on a training course in the capital organised in collaboration with the World Health Organisation to help them identify and overcome nutritional problems. Malnutrition of the poor was the main concern in the Sultanate 20 years ago before oil revenues were used to end a century of lack of development and high mortality rates.

U.S. risks friends, allies and interests in case of war in Gulf — Qasem

By Abdullah Hasanat
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The United States risks to lose its friends and allies in the region in the event of a military conflict in the Gulf, and the damage done to American interests in the region would not be easily repaired, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Marwan Al Qasem said Sunday.

The minister also said that Washington's war rhetoric was contributing to strengthening an Iraqi feeling that military conflict was inevitable and this has complicated efforts to initiate direct American-Iraqi contacts. Qasem said although a purely Arab solution to the four-and-a-half-month-old Gulf conflict was no longer possible, Algerian President Chadli Benjedid was seeking an "Arab input" to efforts to avert a war in the region.

However, "the continued threat of the use of force can only invite a reaction that can consolidate an eventual outbreak of hostilities," the minister told the Jordan Times in an interview.

Ambassador returns to Riyadh

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Nasser Bataineh, has returned to Riyadh, Foreign Minister Marwan Al Qasem disclosed Sunday. "Our ambassador has been in Saudi Arabia for the last four days," Qasem said Sunday. Qasem said that Bataineh, who was recalled to Amman in late September, was in Amman for consultations hinting that relations between the two countries were moving towards a better plain.

The Iraqi leadership and people "already feel that war is inevitable because the other has made it look like there is no way out but force, and violence just breeds violence," Qasem said. The minister said no one was going to benefit from a military conflict in the Gulf, least of all the United States.

"What is it that the U.S. wants to safeguard as its interest in the region? Is it oil? Would it secure it with the attitude and the pattern it is taking? he asked. "It is quite sure that the area will be polluted as a result of this confrontation. Do you think the U.S. will be more or less vulnerable in the region after a military confrontation? I believe the Americans will lose a great deal of their interest and allies, friends in the region. So who is going to benefit from this?"

Prospects for American-Iraqi contacts, as proposed by U.S. President George Bush but set back by disputes over dates, depend on the attitudes of Washington and Baghdad, he said. But, he warned, "ultimatums" will not serve any purpose.

"One gathers that the U.S. wants Iraq to understand the position of the international community and the U.N. resolutions," he said. If that is the case, he pointed out, it should have been the U.N. secretary-general who carries such a message to Baghdad instead of an American official.



Marwan Al Qasem

The minister said there had been talk that advisers to Saddam Hussein were not telling the Iraqi leader the truth and U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's mission to the Iraqi capital is aimed at telling the "truth" to Saddam. "If this is the reason, then it is a monologue, not a dialogue," he said.

"I think that already on a few occasions, at least on the Iraqi side there is a willingness to discuss through a meaningful dialogue," he said. "We in Jordan would like to see an inter-Arab dialogue, particularly amongst the states who are directly involved in this. Although I think there is no exclusive Arab solution today to the issue at hand, it is still imperative to have the Arab input joined with a genuine international input that would lead to a political breakthrough."

Jordan does not believe that it is essential that a final solution

(Continued on page 5)

Government presents its views, plans over agricultural credit

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Agriculture Suleiman Arabiyat Sunday presented a report to Parliament about agricultural credit and farmers' indebtedness as was requested by the Lower House, pointing out that the government had given special attention to the agricultural sector through giving credits for development projects.

The minister reviewed obstacles that impede the agricultural sector in Jordan, specially those that resulted from the Gulf crisis and the closure of Jordan's traditional markets in Arab Gulf states and due to the current blockade imposed on Jordan.

The minister blamed lack of coordination and a general policy in agriculture and lack of cooperation among the credit corporations in particular has brought

about difficulties to this sector.

According to the minister, money-lending institutions in Jordan have been providing credit to the farmers since the 1960s, thus taking over this task from usurers and merchants who used to charge interest rates reaching in some cases up to 50 per cent.

The minister presented his views about dealing with problems affecting the farmers and their production and the indebtedness.

The government can by no means settle the debts due on the farmers in general, and there are some farmers who can pay their dues to the credit corporation and they should do so, Arabiyat noted. There must be certain criteria defining those farmers who deserve assistance from the government due to their heavy

losses and their inability to pay any of the debts because they can not sell their products and for humanitarian reasons, the minister suggested.

He said that only those farmers who are involved in active farming and who live on farming lands, who are unable to pay, who lost their capital for reasons beyond their control and not for neglect, and those who had to face disaster and very serious social problems deserve government assistance.

The minister suggested that money-lending corporations should prepare lists of names of needy farmers and the amounts due from them so that the government can deal with their cases after a thorough study of each

(Continued on page 5)

Cheney says war clock is ticking, Iraq replies it is ready

CAIRO (Agencies) — U.S. Defence Secretary Dick Cheney said Sunday Iraq showed no sign of planning to withdraw from Kuwait and the clock was ticking towards war. The Iraqi defence minister responded that his country was ready to crush any military attack.

"Today I see no sign that (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein intends to withdraw his forces from Kuwait," Cheney told reporters after talks on the Gulf crisis with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

"He continues to commit more forces to the area. He continues to build up his fortifications. He continues to make public statements that Kuwait is now part of Iraq," he said.

The U.N. Security Council has authorised military force un-

less Iraq pulls out of Kuwait by January 15.

The defence secretary stopped over in Cairo after five days of strategy talks in Saudi Arabia with senior U.S. and Saudi military officials.

"The clock is ticking as each day goes by and he does not begin the withdrawal of his forces," Cheney told a news conference before leaving the kingdom.

In Cairo, he repeated the theme.

"Each day that goes by, each week without a sign of Iraqi withdrawal, brings us that much closer to the Jan. 15 deadline... one has to conclude that the situation is not improving and that the days are drawing closer when we may be forced to resort to military force," he said.

Cheney thanked Mubarak and Defence Minister Yousef Sabri Abu Taleb for Egypt's contribution of nearly 40,000 soldiers to a U.S.-led force arrayed against Iraq following the Aug. 2 invasion.

He also held brief talks with Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Jiri Dienstbier — who requested the meeting — to discuss the crisis, security in the Soviet Union and Europe.

In Saudi Arabia, Cheney said U.S. troops in the region were approaching 300,000 and that force, expected to swell to 430,000 in coming weeks, would be ready to go on orders from President George Bush.

But he seemed to tone down his rhetoric somewhat after

(Continued on page 5)

Haifa ferry death toll rises to 21 American sailors

HAIFA (Agencies) — The death toll in the sinking of a charter ferry carrying American sailors was raised to 21 Sunday, including one man whose body has not yet been recovered, a navy official said.

The body of the 20th victim was recovered by Israeli divers earlier Sunday, Haifa police said.

The ferry capsized Saturday shortly after midnight as it was carrying 102 American seamen to the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga from a Christmas shore leave.

Joseph S. Mobley, the Saratoga's skipper, told reporters Sunday about the higher death toll after a tearful memorial service aboard the carrier.

"It is 21 lives lost. We still have the man whom we have not recovered. We have the utmost confidence that he did perish," Mobley said.

"He was definitely on the ferry at the time of the accident, he was definitely not rescued," Mobley said. "He is not on the ship, he is not ashore."

About 1,200 crewmen of the Saratoga, including the 81 survivors of the accident, attended

the memorial service in a hangar aboard the carrier.

The ferry capsized in heavy seas while returning about 100 Gulf duty sailors to the Saratoga after shore leave.

The divers found the sunken ferry and the bodies of 16 U.S. sailors trapped inside Sunday.

Port officials said work had started to raise the ferry. The divers told Israeli army radio there were no outward signs of damage, reinforcing reports that the ferry sank quickly after being hit by a large wave in heavy seas.

Both U.S. and Israeli officials ruled out sabotage.

An Israeli diver identified as Sergeant G. told the radio: "We found it (the ferry) in what appeared to be a state of good repair. We found five servicemen trapped inside... and afterwards some searched the other side and found 11 others."

Port officials and the radio said a naval team had begun operations to raise the vessel with a barge and crane but added that it could take days to bring it to the surface.

(Continued on page 2)

Soviet emigre tide to Israel turns to flood

TEL AVIV (AP) — As Soviet Jews continued to pour into Israel Sunday in record numbers, an immigration official demanded the government declare a state of emergency to handle the influx.

In the southern town of Beer-sheva, a group of new immigrants raised a tent camp to protest lack of housing. And a group of Israelis staged a demonstration to urge that mobile homes for immigrants not be put near their well-off neighbourhood.

About 5,500 Soviet Jews arrived in the country in a special airlift from Thursday through Saturday, and another 1,500 were expected Sunday.

Israeli officials have attributed the upsurge in immigration to fears of political instability and the economic crisis in the Soviet Union, as well as to improved transit through Eastern European countries.

"We have a political and economic crisis here, so nobody is passing an opportunity to leave for Israel, because this is the only possibility to get out," Mikhail Chlenov, head of the

Vaad, an umbrella group of Soviet Jewish organisations, told the daily Hadashot.

Simcha Dinitz, chairman of the quasi-government Jewish Agency that handles immigrant transportation, said the rate was expected to increase to a regular influx of 1,500 Soviet daily.

On Friday and Saturday, the government waived a ban on flights and ordered Israel's national carrier El Al to use every plane available to ferry the Jews from Eastern Europe.

Officials expect more than 30,000 Soviets in December, bringing this year's immigration total to 200,000. The figure includes Ethiopian and other Jewish immigrants, apart from the Soviets. Israel expects about one million Soviets by the end of 1992.

However, Israel radio Sunday dismissed any linkage between the stepped-up immigration and Soviet political tensions. It said the figure for December, so far, was lower than expected.

"This is not an escape of Jews but an orderly exit," said Abraham Ben-Melek, the radio's Soviet affairs correspondent.

Gunman blames massacre of 7 Palestinians on mental illness

Israel rejects change in U.N. agency mandate

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — A 21-year-old Israeli admitted in court Sunday that he shot to death seven Palestinians last May but said his actions resulted from mental illness.

The killings on May 20 in the Tel Aviv suburb of Rishon Le-zion set off three days of violent protests in the occupied territories in which 16 Palestinians died of army gunfire, refuelling the uprising.

Ami Popper, from Rishon Le-zion, admitted the shootings through his court-appointed attorney, David Krimlovsky, on the opening day of his trial in Tel Aviv district court, Israel Radio reported.

District attorney Nurit Schmidt, who is prosecuting the case, said she intended to prove that Popper acted in cold blood and would call witnesses to testify that he behaved calmly during the shootings, the radio said.

Popper is charged with killing seven unarmed Palestinians and wounding 11 others in a so-called slave market, a spot where Arabs gather to be hired as day labourers by Israeli employers.

Popper, armed with an Uzi submachine gun, ordered about 50 Palestinians to sit on the ground and then ranked them with gunfire. Survivors later said they obeyed the man's orders because he had a gun and was wearing Israeli army pants.

After Popper's arrest, authorities said he was deranged and despondent over a failed love affair. Army officials said Popper was dishonourably discharged early from service for being absent without leave, and newspapers reported he once fired a gun at an officer.

Popper's attorney claimed his client was mentally incapable of understanding the charges against him, but a panel of five court-appointed psychiatrists found him competent to stand trial. Family members later complained they could not afford examination by independent psychiatrists.

A former girlfriend, whose name was banned from publication by the court, testified Sunday that she broke off an affair with Popper two weeks before the Rishon Lezion killings and that he threatened to kill himself, the radio said.

In another development, Israel Sunday rejected any change in the mandate of U.N. bodies assigned to the occupied territories following a Security Council resolution that called for the United Nations to monitor Palestinians' safety.

"We are totally opposed to any change in any of the international agencies," Avi Pazner, senior adviser to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, told Reuters.

Diplomats at the United Nations said Friday that U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar planned to use relief officials and member nations' consulates to monitor treatment of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Political sources said Israel was still trying to confirm exactly what changes were proposed by Perez de Cuellar, who outlined his plans at a closed-door Security Council meeting.

"We want to clarify that we object to any change of the traditional functioning of foreign delegations," one political source said. Seven countries have consulates in occupied Jerusalem.

(Continued on page 2)

Iraq seeks WHO help to combat hepatitis

NICOSIA (AP) — Iraq has asked the World Health Organisation (WHO) to take steps to free medicine and medical equipment to combat hepatitis, one of the diseases it says is increasing because of United Nations trade sanctions.

The Iraqi News Agency (INA) said a national committee against hepatitis sent a telegram saying the sanctions halted imports of "the equipment and special tools to discover the hepatitis B virus and also the vaccine against it."

The report said the committee told WHO officials the disease was a major factor in the deaths of more than 2,000 children under five that have died as a result of the embargo.

"The committee called in the telegram on the World Health Organisation to interfere immediately to release the food and medicine seized and release imported medicine, vaccine, equipment and tools to control the hepatitis virus in Iraq," the news agency said.

Iraq has said that hundreds of small children have died as a result of the embargo.

Benjedid arrives in Mauritania

NOUAKCHOTT (Agencies) — Algerian President Chadli Benjedid, on a whirlwind international tour to seek a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis, arrived Sunday in Mauritania.

Benjedid, a veteran Middle East mediator, made no statement to reporters before meeting President Maouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya.

He flew in from talks with Morocco's King Hassan, after previously seeing Pope John Paul and leaders in Italy, France and Spain.

Earlier, he spent a week touring nine Middle Eastern and North African countries including Iraq, Libya and Tunisia.

Mauritania, which is dominated by Arabic-speaking Moors but has a large black African population, supports Iraq in the Gulf crisis triggered by the Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait.

No details were disclosed of Benjedid's talks with King Hassan at the royal palace in Rabat. In Madrid, Benjedid told reporters Algeria had not received any mandate and had no peace plan, the official Algerian news agency APS reported.

The agency said the Algerian position was based on the premise that Iraq "has a real and sincere will for a dialogue and a peaceful solution."

It said Baghdad insisted on a concrete solution of the Palestinian question and was "fully aware of the reality of the balance of forces" in the area.

"Consequently the doors to dialogue still remain open, regardless of the quarrel over dates which must be overcome as quickly as possible."

Iraq and the United States have not been able to agree dates for high-level talks before the Jan. 15 deadline set by the U.N. Security Council for a total withdrawal from Kuwait.

Algerian Foreign Minister Sid'Ahmed Ghozali said Benjedid came to Morocco "convinced there is room for a peaceful solution and it is absolutely essential that we work together."

Oman counsels patience and dialogue in Gulf crisis

DOHA (Agencies) — Leaders of the Gulf Arab alliance Sunday deliberated options for war and peace in the Gulf while Oman pressed for a dialogue with Iraq ahead of any military strike.

King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and his five partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) met here in an annual summit that aimed to focus on the Gulf crisis and efforts to devise a combined military strategy for the defence of the oil-rich region.

Official sources close to the summit said the Omanis were "counselling patience" and contending that further peace avenues should be explored before taking the military option against Iraq.

"This does not mean that the Omanis are opposed to the consensus that the Iraqi leader should be disciplined forcefully," said one official, who insisted on anonymity. "The Omani

are partners in the (U.S.-led) multinational force assembled in eastern Saudi Arabia to deal with the Iraqis if necessary."

He said the Omanis saw that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were giving priority to military action. This, he contended, was justified because those two GCC countries were directly affected by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have insisted there will be no dialogue with Baghdad before the Iraqis pull out of Kuwait unconditionally and the Al Sabah family is reinstated as rulers of the emirate.

"The GCC leaders are set against rewarding the aggressor with any concessions," Qatari Foreign Minister Mubarak Al Khatir said earlier. "They will not engage in any dialogue or hold any negotiations with the Iraqi leader before his forces are completely withdrawn from Kuwait."

Hrawi, Karami strive hard to form cabinet

BEIRUT (Agencies) — President Elias Hrawi and Prime Minister-designate Omar Karami are facing difficulties in forming a national reconciliation government charged with ending 15 years of civil war.

The Falange Party, the biggest right-wing Christian political force in Lebanon, has joined the nation's main Christian militia in refusing to participate in Karami's projected cabinet.

The move dampened Karami's chances of quickly forming a broad-based new government to replace that of Prime Minister Salim Al Hoss, who resigned with his 14-man cabinet Thursday.

Both Falangist as well as Christian warlord Samir Geagea's Lebanese Forces militia claim Karami plans to bring in more pro-Syrian Christians than right-wingers.

"Those potential members of the cabinet do not represent the Christian community. Their

wide presence in the cabinet creates an imbalance in favour of the Muslims," said Falangist statement published Sunday.

"Such a government will murder reconciliation rather than bring it about," the statement said.

It was alluding to Elie Hobeika, Geagea's main Syrian-backed Maronite Catholic rival, and Assad Hardan, a senior official of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP).

The SSNP is a secular Lebanese leftist faction that advocates that merger of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, pre-Israel Palestine, Kuwait and Cyprus in a greater Syria.

Official sources said Hrawi was in contact with the Lebanese Forces and the Falange (kataeb) party, in a bid to win them over.

"There has been no breakthrough yet," one source told Reuters. "But the formation of the government cannot be delayed much longer."

U.S. Congress vote on Gulf possible as inquiry ends

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. Congress could soon face a politically perilous vote on whether to endorse President George Bush's policy on the Gulf as fears of a war there grow.

A vote appearing to support a war could come back to haunt members if U.S. forces become bogged down in a costly military operation. A vote against could appear to undercut the troops and give Bush political ammunition if his policy succeeds.

House of Representatives Speaker Thomas Foley said last week the president would have to take the initiative in seeking a resolution authorising force in the Gulf, where U.S.-led multinational forces are ranged against Iraq.

While an affirmative vote was likely it would not be overwhelming, Foley added.

Hearings before Senate and House committees ended on Thursday with former British Prime Minister Edward Heath testifying to the House Armed Services Committee.

Congressional leaders are beginning to look ahead to a possible January debate focusing on a resolution of support for Bush's policy. If it takes place, it is likely to be before the United Nations-imposed Jan. 15 deadline for Iraq to leave Kuwait, after which force can be used to eject Baghdad's troops.

Members are aware that such a debate would almost certainly produce political fallout.

Senate Democratic leader George Mitchell said events in the next few weeks, especially

any U.S.-Iraqi talks on the crisis, would affect Senate action, because of the uncertainty he declined to predict the terms of a Senate debate.

In the six weeks since Bush announced plans to increase U.S. troop strength in the Gulf to about 400,000 for a possible offensive, critics, mostly opposition Democrats, have called for time to allow a U.N. economic blockade to work.

They have been backed by many of the expert witnesses at the congressional hearings — most significantly Admiral William Crowe, who retired only last year as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Congress had planned to recess for much of January but because of the Gulf crisis the House is expected to stay technically in session and Mitchell says the Senate will not take a recess.

The White House says Bush would like any congressional resolution on the crisis to mirror the U.N. resolution.

Although Bush's policy is the subject of sharp debate, Mitchell and six other senators who accompanied him on a recent trip to the Gulf muted their reservations last Thursday and were unanimous in supporting his goal of getting Iraq to pull out of Kuwait.

Many Democrats have said the decision to increase the American force strength changed U.S. policy from the announced "Desert Shield" to a "desert sword." Some have accused him of putting the United States on a course to war.

But Senate Republican leader Robert Dole said last week the congressional hearings had sent "dangerously misleading signals" about the U.S. stance on the crisis.

Administration officials have voiced doubts that a sanctions-only policy would force Iraqi withdrawal. They fear that trying sanctions for up to 18 months as suggested would risk fracturing the international anti-Iraq coalition.

The administration and leading members of Congress are also at odds over the congressional role in sending U.S. troops into battle.

'Agents in place'

Iraq and Libya have agents in place ready to attack U.S. and British targets in the Middle East, Europe and the United States if a war begins in the Gulf, a U.S. magazine reported Saturday.

The report in U.S. News and World Report said U.S. intelligence agencies believe there are underground cells of extremists in major U.S. cities ready to act on orders from Iraq and Libya in case the United States and its allies attack Iraq.

"Based on counter-intelligence evidence gathered in Turkey, Morocco and Pakistan, analysts have concluded that ... gangs financed by (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein and (Libyan leader) Muammar Qadhafi already have picked their targets for a revenge offensive in case of war," the weekly magazine said in its latest edition.

U.S. forces on special alert over Christmas

WITH U.S. FORCES, Saudi Arabia (R) — U.S. forces in the Gulf have been put on a high state of alert in case Iraq tries to stage a surprise attack over the Christmas holiday, military sources said Monday.

The military is apparently worried about a possible strike similar to one by Egypt and Syria on Israel in October 1973.

A senior U.S. military official said troops would be on special alert for about a week.

"They (U.S. soldiers) understand that we're going to be on a heightened state of alert at that time because the enemy might think that we won't be and try to take advantage of us," said the official, who asked not to be identified.

The commander of U.S. forces in the Gulf, General Norman Schwarzkopf, has acknowledged that the multinational force massing against Iraq faced increased danger over Christmas and said his troops would be prepared.

"You bet, I don't tell the enemy anything but I will damn sure tell Saddam Hussein that he should not expect us to be all stood down on Christmas and think that he's going to be able to catch us napping and asleep on Christmas Day," he said.

"That's not going to happen. All of my troops out there understand that."

A British military spokesman would not comment on the alert status of his country's forces but

radio had earlier quoted Franzen as saying German goods may have actually been shipped in violation of the sanctions. The radio later corrected its report.

Der Spiegel magazine has reported two German companies may have helped Iraq in the production of nerve gas. The magazine also alleged a third German firm gave Iraq sensitive nuclear know-how and equipment, but the company denied the report.

"On Friday, the government confirmed Spiegel's report that U.S. intelligence had handed over to Bonn a list of 50 German companies suspected of violating the embargo."

At the time, government spokesman Dieter Vogel said the matter was being investigated.

German firms said seeking to violate anti-Iraq sanctions

BONN (AP) — A government official said Saturday that clues had been found indicating German firms had planned to break international sanctions against Iraq.

Volker Franzen, spokesman for the Economics Ministry, said there are signs "a few" German firms had made plans to try to ship goods that violated the U.N. embargo.

He did not name the companies or give other details.

Franzen said the clues came from a list, compiled by U.S. officials, of German firms suspected of breaking the embargo.

He said that so far in the government's examination of the U.S. information, no proof has been found that German goods had been illegally landed in Iraq.

Westdeutscher Rundfunk

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Iraq not a nuclear threat at present, says expert

WASHINGTON (USIA) — Iraq apparently lacks sufficient material to build a nuclear bomb, an American nuclear expert told a congressional panel December 18.

Physicist Sidney Drell, deputy director of the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, said that Iraq's "known supply" of highly enriched uranium "seems not quite enough to produce a nuclear weapon."

He stressed, however, that a proper evaluation of the Iraqi nuclear programme would depend on "detailed intelligence information," which could not be discussed in open session.

Drell was asked about Iraq's nuclear potential during a hearing of the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee concerning safety requirements of the U.S. nuclear weapons programme.

In an apparent reference to published reports indicating that Iraq currently possesses 12.5 kilograms of the enriched

uranium, Drell told the committee, "if the amount they have is the amount that's been identified in the press," then there is no short-term nuclear threat from Iraq.

But he was careful to note that a real threat could emerge from Iraq in future years. "I see no reason," he said, "to feel comfortable that some years down the line, they won't have a limited nuclear arsenal."

Drell appeared before the lawmakers as chairman of the Panel on Nuclear Weapons Safety, which was created by the House Armed Services Committee in May, 1990, after questions arose about the safety of several U.S. nuclear weapons.

After the two other members of the panel — Nobel Laureate Charles Townes and John Foster, chairman of the Defence Science Board — said they would not comment on the Iraqi nuclear programme in open session, the committee closed the hearing to the press and public.

Dates answer to sugar shortages in Iraq

BAGHDAD (AP) — Dates may be the answer to shortages of sugar brought on by United Nations sanctions imposed against Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait.

Confectionaries are now making date-based sweets, like "madgoga," instead of the traditional, richer sweets like "baklava" and "min alsama" which require plenty of sugar, flour and fat to make.

Dates are the Iraqis' favourite winter fruit. But they have rarely tried to turn it into a dessert.

The younger generations have heard about "madgoga" from their grandmothers, but a few have tasted the sweet.

Madgoga "is cheap and easy to make. I wonder why we had forgotten it and have only remembered our best traditional sweets in this hour of crisis," said Abdul Hussein Jawad, whose family is a well-known Baghdad sweetmaker.

Jawad said he makes "madgoga" by adding sesame paste to ground dates. Something he adds nuts and coconuts to make it tastier and more nourishing.

Dates and milk constituted the staple diet of bedouin tribes in the desert, mainly because the fruit is rich in vitamins and milk contains the water necessary for rehydration.

Madgoga was rediscovered after sweets shops were forced to close in the wake of international sanctions that followed the Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait.

The embargo has forced the government to ration some food items, including cooking oil, flour, milk and sugar. These items have disappeared from the market, but families receive limited quantities from government centres.

Iraq says that more than 2,000 children under five have died because of shortages in medicines and baby food that followed the U.N. embargo. Diplomats say there are no serious shortages in medicines.

Iraq is the world's leading dates producer, provide international markets with more than 80 per cent of its supplies.

The country produces 300 kinds of dates but exports about 20, keeping the rest for domestic consumption.

Kuwait-based Palestinians allowed rights to sponsor

DUBAI (AP) — Palestinians registered as residents of Kuwait, which Iraq calls its "19th province," have been given the right to sponsor foreign nationals who wish to remain in the emirate, travellers said Sunday.

A number of Indians who fled Kuwait through Dubai en route to India, who declined to be identified, said several thousand Indians have now acquired the new Iraqi documents that permit them to stay in Kuwait.

Members of the large expatriate population that fills the labour gap in the oil-rich countries can only acquire residence permits if they are sponsored by local citizens, companies or government departments.

The Indian sources said the Palestinians have been given the status of a "first class" resident with the right to sponsor other foreigners.

Until Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the Palestinians themselves were under the sponsorship of Kuwaiti nationals.

It was not clear from the accounts given by the returning Indians whether the Palestinians were charging fees for sponsorship.

Under normal circumstances, as is the practice in other Gulf countries, foreigners apart from those directly employed by the sponsor have to pay an annual fee for the privilege.

After declaring Kuwait its

19th province, Baghdad issued new identity documents to the residents. In late October, Iraq announced that all foreign nationals had to regularise their status by finding new sponsors and acquiring new identity papers by Nov. 20. The deadline was later extended to Dec. 5.

Iraq annexed Kuwait six days after its Aug. 2 invasion of the country, which had some 100,000 Palestinians, the largest expatriate community out of a total of about a million.

The Palestinians in Kuwait, according to accounts by several refugees, were split over the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, some critical but the larger number supportive.

The rest of the population — an estimated 800,000 — were Kuwaitis of whom nearly 500,000 either were away on summer holiday or fled their homeland, leaving foreign nationals under their sponsorship stranded.

As elsewhere, members of the foreign community who opted to leave Kuwait had to be issued exit visas. The bulk of the 110,000-strong Indian community who left acquired them.

But according to some evacuees there are still several thousand Indians and other foreigners who have opted to stay. Some have not been able to find sponsors among the Kuwaitis who remain under occupation.

Germans, Dutch 'promise' ammo for British forces

LONDON (AP) — Germany and the Netherlands have promised to supply ammunition in support of British armoured forces in the Gulf, the British Broadcasting Corporation reported Sunday.

The Ministry of Defence, however, denied the BBC's report that British forces now in Saudi Arabia had concluded they did not have sufficient ammunition.

"Our forces in the Gulf have sufficient ammunition stocks," said a Defence Ministry spokesman, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"We are seeking further stocks for those forces that are going out in the new year, the Movement of the 4th brigade backing up 4th brigade which is already out there."

Britain announced on Nov. 22 that it was moving from 4th brigade from Germany, where it is part of NATO forces, in a move that nearly doubled the British commitment to Saudi Arabia.

The Ministry of Defence said 4th brigade's armament would include 175 Challenger Main battle tanks, 96 Scimitar and Scorpion light tanks and anti-aircraft weapons.

The new deployment will add 11,000 soldiers to the previous British commitment of 16,000.

The BBC's diplomatic reporter, Paul Reynolds, said the report that Britain was seeking ammunition support from its allies emerged on Prime Minister John Major's return flight to Britain on Saturday.

Reynolds said the appeal had been made at the European Summit in Rome a week ago.

Before leaving Washington, Major commented that war with Iraq was not inevitable, but he expected any conflict to be brief.

"I don't think it would be a lengthy operation but I am not going to speculate about timing," he said.

Reynolds said other British officials explained that they expected any conflict to last about six to eight weeks.

Prince Charles, ending a visit to Britain's forces in the Gulf, took a fighter-pilot's eye look at the desert Sunday.

He climbed into the cockpit of a fully armed Tornado but kept all wheels firmly on the ground. Asked if he would like to take the plane up, the 43-year-old prince said: "One day, yes (but) I think I'm getting too old for this."

On Saturday, the prince rode a Challenger tank, chatted to infantrymen in gas masks and was shown by an Australian officer how to throw a boomerang.

He said British forces were ready for war.

"They are highly professional and incredibly well-prepared," he told reporters.

On Saturday evening, the royal visitor dined on a royal navy frigate as it enforced an international blockade of Iraq by challenging a Panamanian-registered tanker.

Wine was served but as the warship was in international waters the liquor would presumably cause no offence to the Saudi authorities, for whom alcohol is anathema.

All Western forces in the Gulf will celebrate Christmas and New Year without the traditional alcoholic beverages out of deference for their hosts' feelings.

Gunman

(Continued from page 1)

Changing the mandate of U.N. bodies would require a Security Council resolution, and the United States, which has the power to veto a resolution, has raised objections to such a plan.

Diplomats quoted Perez de Cuellar as saying he would ask Giorgio Giacomelli, the Vienna-based head of the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), to request members of his 2,300-person staff to file reports on the situation.

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Haifa

(Continued from page 1)

Israel army radio reported that some of the sailors were drunk and at least one of the dead had been handcuffed, apparently after being arrested by U.S. military police for drunkenness.

Alan Dooley, a Pentagon spokesman, said Saturday that no sailors aboard the boat were in handcuffs.

Three investigations by Haifa police, the Israeli port authority and the U.S. navy have been launched into the sinking of the Israeli ferry Tuvia.

It remained unclear what happened to the 57-foot, double-decked ferry. Survivors reported that waves of about three to four feet had been pouring over the stern and that two larger waves then hit the ferry, overturning it.

Israeli port officials said that a large number of sailors had congregated in the back of the ferry in anticipation of getting off and may have destabilised the craft.

The ferry went down about 200 metres from the Saratoga, which was anchored about 1.5 kilometres off Haifa's shore.

The Saratoga task force, based at Mayport naval air station in Jacksonville, Florida, includes the destroyer Sampson, cruiser South Carolina and combat stores ship Sirius. It has 6,200 men, including about 4,500 aboard the Saratoga.

The ships anchored off Haifa Thursday for the holidays, with shore leaves beginning Friday.

The Saratoga and its three escort ships were in the Red Sea as part of the naval buildup in the Gulf region.

The accident was the deadliest involving U.S. servicemen in Operation Desert Shield, and it raised the number of Americans who have died to at least 74.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR	
JORDAN TELEVISION Tel. 773111-19	CHURCHES
PROGRAMME ONE 15:30 Koran 15:40 Program review 15:45 Children programmes 16:00 News summary 18:10 Local programme 19:50 Program review 20:00 News in Arabic 20:30 Arabic series 21:40 Program review 21:50 Local programmes 23:00 News summary in Arabic	St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swetich Tel. (819744) Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 652785 St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590 Church of the Annunciation Tel. 627440 De la Salle Church Tel. 661757 Terrasanta Church Tel. 622366 Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541 Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 628543 Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331 Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 773261 Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751 Armenian International Church Tel. 685326 Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811205 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 615817, 654932
PROGRAMME TWO 18:00 Cartoon films 18:35 Adventure Voyage 19:00 News in French 19:15 Weekly Sport magazine 19:30 News in Hebrew 19:45 Varieties 20:30 The Golden Girls 21:10 The Bordenbeck connection 22:00 News in English 22:50 Derrick	WEATHER Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology It will be partly cloudy to cloudy and there will be a chance for scattered showers. Winds will be westerly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be partly
PRAYER TIMES 05:06 Fajr 06:28 (Sunrise) Duha 11:35 Dhuhur 14:19 'Asr 16:42 Maghreb 18:05 'Isha	USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY AMMAN: Dr. Abdul Majid Al Shaar 70145 Dr. Mufced Tamous 86440 Dr. Mahmoud Azam 59025 Dr. Subert Tamous 661912 Ferdous pharmacy 77336 Al Asena pharmacy 63755 Naroukh pharmacy 62672 Al Salam pharmacy 63673 Yacoub pharmacy 64845 Shmoussi pharmacy 62740

MARKET PRICES	
Upperflower price in Jds per kg	
Apple	650 / 500
Banana (Mukammal)	450 / 480
Beans	400 / 350
Cabbage	30 / 40
Carrot	180 / 140
Cornflower	130 / 40
Com	180 / 140
Cucumbers (large)	130 / 100
Cucumbers (small)	360 / 200
Dates	500 / 400
Eggplant	180 / 140
Garlic	1400 / 1000
Grapes	550 / 450
Lemon	250 / 150
Mallow	180 / 130
Marrow (large)	100 / 80
Marrow (small)	220 / 170
Onion (dry)	250 / 200
Onion (green)	180 / 140
Okra	600 / 500
Orange	400 / 250
Pepper (hot)	180 / 140
Pepper (sweet)	120 / 80
Potato	280 / 240
Radish	150 / 100
Sage	550 / 450
Spanish	200 / 150
Tomatoes	220 / 170

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Where scale tips

WITH BOTH Washington and Baghdad preparing for battle after the Jan. 15 U.N. deadline, Algerian President Chadli Benjedid persists in his journey for peace across Europe and North Africa. No doubt the Algerian leader is pinning some hope on last-minute European intervention to avoid war and destruction in the Gulf region. France and Italy have both said they would be willing to spearhead such an effort. After all, in addition to the peoples and countries of the Middle East the European peoples and countries would be the most directly affected by an outbreak of hostilities over the Kuwaiti crisis. The U.S. may think it can afford a war in the Gulf because it is not so dependent on Arab oil and the theatre of any such war is thousands of kilometres from continental America. But Europe cannot think of itself in those terms: It is much closer to the area and would be the first to pay for its consequences. It is common knowledge that, with the exception of Britain, the European Community is not always on the same wavelength as the White House on the crisis. There is a limit as to how far the EC nations would go to appease President George Bush's personal vendetta against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. And here is where a joint Arab-European role can be played effectively.

On behalf of his president, the Algerian foreign minister, Sid Ahmad Ghozali, has proposed that the U.N. Security Council simply take a definitive stand on the need to resolve the Palestinian conflict. Such a clear-cut and unequivocal stance, he said, would untie the knot of the crisis and would unleash a wave of compromises from Iraq over the Kuwaiti case. Obviously Ghozali was making such an offer on the basis of information from the Iraqi president himself. With this in mind, an iron-clad position on the Palestinian problem is not a high price to pay in order to save all parties from a devastating war.

Linkage or no linkage, a solemn pronouncement by the council's permanent members that a concerted effort will be able to settle the Palestinian question is not such an immoral position to take in any case, unless of course there is no political will on the part of the council's members to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. If it would please Bush and his secretaries of defence and state that such a bold commitment to deal head on with the Palestinian problem be coupled with a clarification that there is no formal linkage between the conflicts of the Middle East and the Gulf then so be it. No one wants to be so petty as to make an insurmountable issue of this point. What the Arab side, including Iraq, would insist on its separate but equal treatment of this part of the world. Would it not weigh heavily on the conscious of Washington to know that it could have avoided war by simply sending clearer signals that it intends to perform an honourable and noble task in the Middle East but did not do so for a petty reason? Since the Algerian foreign minister's submission on a way out of the Gulf quagmire is part and parcel of the Algerian president's ongoing search for peace, Bush can be a bit more accommodating of Iraq's legitimate demands when what is asked of him is not a terrible price anyway. All that is called for is a commitment to be fair in the Middle East and to be serious about it.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Rai's Arabic daily Sunday echoed Foreign Minister Marwan Al Qasem's views about Security Council resolution 681 describing it as devoid of all meaning. Indeed, by issuing such resolution the Council failed to achieve anything, and in fact the Council missed an opportunity that should have been seized to deal with the Palestine question more effectively to bring about peace to the region, said the paper. Israel for its part did not only refuse the resolution, but also displayed further defiance to the world community by scoffing at it and declaring that it does not change anything, the paper noted. It said that the Council's delay in taking any action, and its failure to force the Israelis to give up occupied territory and recognise the rights of the Palestinian people served as an encouragement for Tel Aviv and world Zionism to pursue repressive actions and programmes to judaize the Arab areas. By failing to take proper measures to end Israel's crimes against the Palestinians the Council has thus proved its impotency and total failure to implement international legitimacy which it has been bragging about, the paper continued. The paper also pointed out that the Council's failure was largely due to Washington's pressures and influences which had been instrumental over the past months to rally the Council against Iraq and to secure a resolution for using force to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait. This weak resolution which can only serve the Israelis, said the paper, should open the eyes of those Arabs who aligned themselves behind the Americans vis-a-vis Iraq, that Israel is intent on pursuing its ambitions regardless of the situation in the Gulf, benefiting from disunity and a disarray among Arab ranks.

A draft law on money changers in Jordan comes under discussion by columnist Salah Abdul Samad in Al Rai's daily Sunday. The draft which has been sent to Parliament for debate before it becomes law can by no means do justice to the money changers in Jordan because it tends to give monopoly in money changing business to a handful of the rich who will be operating legally and driving many others underground to deal in black market money changing operations, says the writer. Abdul Samad quotes a well known money changer Hani Al Saudi's memorandum sent to parliament in which he presents his criticism of the new law and points out the flaws in that law. According to the draft JD 500,000 will be required from each money changer to have as initial capital to start the business and will be asked to deposit 30 per cent of the capital with the central bank as reserve. This means that the money changing business will be the sole property of a few rich people who can afford such huge sums while the majority of others will be forced to deal with money changing in what is known as a black market, says the writer. These are some of the points referred to by Saudi in his memorandum to Parliament and which urgently should be discussed by the concerned committees before a law can be endorsed, the writer demands.

Weekly Political Pulse

IT IS not sufficient to argue forcefully and vehemently against war in the Gulf without complementing the argument with a meaningful push for peace. Likewise it is certainly not enough to express appreciation and understanding for Iraq's position on the entire Gulf conflict without showing Baghdad an honourable way towards settlement. Iraq and its people need to extricate themselves from the Gulf quagmire in an honourable exit that would assure them continued strength and well-being. The Arab World has a vested interest in keeping Iraq strong. The Arabs should be helped by all those who profess love and affection towards them to come out openly and clearly in support of a compromise solution that could keep Iraq intact and potent. In the long run, Iraq's well-being is more relevant and important than Kuwait's perse, and its oil fields. There is a limit to how far Iraq should allow itself to

go in pursue of its legitimate claims against Kuwait and its territory. It is clear that there is a point in this Iraqi endeavour beyond which the law of diminishing returns begins to operate on Baghdad as well.

Iraq, therefore, should be encouraged to make a bold gesture for peace over the Kuwaiti situation and its ramifications. It should be prodded to take a giant leap in the direction of peace in the Gulf by suggesting that a compromise is not completely ruled out.

There are so many positive signals emanating from Baghdad suggesting a compromise is possible, but unfortunately they always get drowned by other confusing signals. Public relations is an important and integral part of diplomacy and Iraq needs to pay closer attention to it.

To be sure Kuwait is part of the greater Arab homeland and so is Iraq. As long as

Kuwait is governed by an Arab regime that is faithful and true to Arab nationalism, it makes no difference and should make no difference whether Iraqi Arab nationalists or Kuwaiti Arab nationalists are the rulers of Kuwait. It is high time that all Arabs, true Arabs, go back to the basics and concentrate on the essentials rather than the form. If all Arab regimes are once again motivated by Arab nationalism and guided by the quest for one Arab homeland, structured in some form of confederation or another, one would not make too much of an issue over which brand of Arabs govern this or that part of the Arab homeland. Accordingly, what is even more relevant and pressing than Iraq's legitimate claims on some parts of Kuwait and more urgent than securing for Iraq an outlet to the sea is the kind of legitimacy that is being contemplated for Kuwait when the dust settles.

Had Iraq made this point its

main bone of contention rather than the mere physical control of Kuwait, per se, its position would have been much more understood and sympathised with. Besides it would have been able to avoid going to the extreme of annexing Kuwait. As it is the Arab peoples are torn between two loyalties: one against occupation and annexation and the other in favour of Arabs becoming the true masters over their natural resources especially oil and uranium. And when Arab states start treating one another as brotherly countries, as they piously and ceremonially do in Arab summits, then a Kuwaiti outlet to the sea is and should be an Iraqi outlet to the sea as well. Vice versa, an Iraqi fresh water source is and should be a Kuwaiti source of sweet water. Had Kuwait and Iraq developed this kind of relationship over the years and established and nurtured a genuine Arab neighbourly relations, the whole Gulf crisis

would not have arisen in the first place.

Yet, other Arab nationalists would warn that foreign countries, especially those with a vested interest in Arab oil would never want good Arab neighbourly relations to flourish or take root in the Arab World for fear that that would jeopardise those foreign powers' national interests. In fact this has always been the concern and worry of Arab nationalists. To deal with this issue effectively and permanently, one needs to promote democratic regimes throughout the Arab World. The most assured way to bring back legitimacy to Kuwait and elsewhere in the Arab World for that matter is to reestablish democratic systems of government there and elsewhere. Iraq has nothing to fear from a democratic Kuwaiti regime and should make this quest its primary objective rather than territory or oil. The Iraqi leadership should be encouraged to

give priority to this goal. The Iraqi leadership can easily make a declaration to the effect that its government is willing to entertain withdrawal from Kuwait, as French President Francois Mitterrand had suggested a few months ago in a speech to the U.N. General Assembly, on condition that foreign military presence is totally and effectively terminated in the Gulf and a genuine nationalist Arab regime in Kuwait, free of foreign hegemony, is established. These objectives are now more urgent and relevant than the Rumaila oil field and the two small islands off the coast of Kuwait. At least this way, Iraq's priorities would be more wisely articulated and comprehended. Iraq's true friends are duty bound to promote such Iraqi thinking. This way Baghdad can effectively frustrate the conspiracy against its might as a regional power to reckon with.

Edward Heath: War with Iraq is a nightmare, even and especially if West wins

By Oliver Gillie

THE real nightmare for the coalition forces in the Gulf would be to win a war against Iraq, says Edward Heath. American and European soldiers would then have to occupy a devastated and hostile country and the Arab Nation would be sure to turn against them.

On the other hand, what Americans have called "the nightmare scenario" — an Iraqi withdrawal to a small part of northern Kuwait — could provide the prospect of a lasting settlement, believes Mr. Heath. It is not too late for such a withdrawal to be obtained by negotiation and for guarantees to be provided by the Arab League, if the United States and Iraq can agree on a date to talk, he says.

"A lot more flexibility is needed over dates to get things started. The Jan. 15 is the date after which the United Nations countries are permitted to take military action. It is permissive, not mandatory. Choosing a date close to then is not in any way impeding military action, which in any case is going to take some time to organise."

"I am sure that Saddam Hussein realises this because he is extremely well informed. I found that when I met him. The people who say that he is completely isolated are talking nonsense. You can't isolate anybody in the modern world."

"The Iraqis have defences that go considerable distances back into Iraq. This means that while our people are attacking they are open to the Iraqi weapons and great damage will be done. I am advised by oil experts outside of Iraq that President Saddam has already deep-mined the Kuwaiti oil wells and by pressing a button they can all go up in flames. It will be the biggest fire the world has ever known. They estimate that the temperature in Kuwait will go as high as 60°C, and with the prevailing wind it would make it impossible for the Saudis to work their wells for the simple reason that people could not withstand the temperatures. Once the Kuwaiti wells are ablaze, the experts tell me, it is

very difficult to get all that under control."

"In addition, Saddam Hussein has long-distance weapons that he can use against Saudi Arabia at strategic points. If this happens, then the world will lose between 40 and 50 per cent of its oil supplies and it's going to take years to get it back again. The consequences for the world economy would be that much of the industry of the Western world would grind to a halt."

"It will be the third world war because of the number of countries involved. They cover the whole world. Once it starts you can't tell what the consequences will be. There has been a great ecclesiastical argument over whether war is justified. One school of thought is that a limited war is justified. But that is not valid because you can't limit a war today."

"What would we be fighting this war for? That is the question many Americans are asking, but here it has not been asked with any force at all. The answer, first of all, is the United Nations. One can understand that the Iraqis are cynical about this. They say the Russians went into Afghanistan and nothing effective happened. There have been so many other cases that the Arabs can cite where the U.N. has taken no military action. When the Americans bombed Libya nothing was done. When they went into Panama the U.N. did nothing. And the Israelis constantly — the U.N. did nothing."

"So why is the U.N. taking action this time? You can explain to them that it's because the cold war has finished and so you haven't got the balance that existed over the Gulf for so long. It will be ironic if the ending of the cold war leads to war in the Gulf with all the appalling consequences."

"The first resolution of the U.N., Resolution 660, had three operative paragraphs. The second called upon Iraq to withdraw immediately and unconditionally from Kuwait. The third called upon Iraq and Kuwait to resolve their differ-

ences immediately. The word immediately in both clauses meant they were to be simultaneous, but this has been forgotten. In speeches, the British prime ministers have never mentioned that these differences have to be resolved. We hear that Saddam Hussein has to get out and that's that."

"One of the differences between Iraq and Kuwait is the question of the boundaries that were fixed in 1961. I negotiated them when I was Lord Privy Seal at the Foreign Office. I know all the rulers in the Gulf. The argument from the Iraqi side is that during the war with Iran the Kuwaitis moved the border forward some 30 to 40 miles nearer to Iraq. I don't now if that is correct or not but it ought to be settled by discussions. If necessary with an intermediary. It doesn't justify a war."

"The next argument is that, as a result of this extension of the boundary, the oil beneath has been siphoned off by Kuwait. This, too, ought to be settled by discussion. Then there is the problem of the islands, which will cover Iraq's entrance to the Gulf. Again, this ought to be a matter of resolving differences as in U.N. Resolution 660."

"If the Iraqis withdraw to the boundaries of Kuwait what guarantee is there that the Americans and the British will not go into Kuwait and then be in a better position to attack Iraq? The prime minister has said that if the Iraqis withdrew, then we would not go in, but that won't be enough for Saddam Hussein simply because he doesn't trust the British or the Americans an inch. His reply would be what happens if the Emir of Kuwait asks the coalition to go back in? Will you refuse his request? You didn't last time, so why should I accept that you will refuse his request next time? What is your guarantee worth?"

"The answer to all this, I think, is that the Arab League has to come in and provide a buffer force to reassure both sides that the rest of these countries are not going to attack him

even when he has made changes in Kuwait. That goes back to the situation in 1961-62 when the Arab League did come in and I believe that they would be prepared to do that again."

"These things have to be sorted out. You can't just say: Get out of Kuwait" and that is the end of the matter. If we can get into the position where President Saddam can resolve his differences with Kuwait so it is no longer necessary for his forces to be there, and can add to it that there is going to be a determined attempt to deal with the Palestinian question, then I think the Iraqi leader's position will be secure."

"If George Bush can say he has organised things so that Saddam Hussein has withdrawn and he can bring all his forces home because there is going to be a conference to deal with Palestine and Israel, I think that would satisfy American opinion. President Bush would have to adjust his requirement for Saddam Hussein to withdraw from the whole of Kuwait, but then he has the third paragraph of Resolution 660 on which to do that. So far it has suited them to forget about paragraph three and just talk about paragraph two. But if one is determined to settle things without a war, these resolutions can be used."

"Since the oil hike of 1973 the Middle East has become a highly developed area of the world. Their leaders are highly educated and their populations greatly internationalised. Some Western leaders have not caught up with that and are treating them like a very inferior group in the world."

"I am convinced that the final arrangements of a settlement will have to be made by the Arabs themselves. First of all because the Arabs used to dealing with situations of this kind. If we try to impose a solution I don't think the Arabs will accept it."

"If there was an American withdrawal I don't think it likely that Iraq would attack Saudi Arabia because President Saddam now realises the forces that

can be mustered against him, in addition to the forces the Saudis themselves have. And if the Arab League was to negotiate the final arrangement and act as some sort of buffer force that danger is greatly reduced."

"If the Armed Services Committee ask for my opinion of Saddam Hussein I shall endeavour to give it. I notice people have stopped calling him mad. This was all part of the buildup at the beginning. He is not mad in the least. He's a very astute person, a clever person. He made a misjudgment about Kuwait and I am sure that he recognised now that it was a misjudgment. He was very calm during the three hours I talked to him, never once raised his voice."

"My judgment is that if the main problem is resolved the so-called nightmare scenario would be acceptable to the American government, but this is again where the question of the Arabs finally sorting it out among themselves comes in. It became public knowledge in a big way that Prince Sultan, defence minister of Saudi Arabia, said to his Kuwaiti friends that they should not be ashamed of making boundary changes where it was proved to be justifiable. That was a very clear indication to the Kuwaitis that the Saudis would accept that — in fact advised it."

"Prince Sultan is a powerful man. He commands all the Saudi forces. If the Arabs themselves are able to say that this is their agreement then President Bush is in the clear."

"Quite a section of the British press is warlike and that has led to leading articles day after day actually demanding we have a war. Those people can't have any conception of what war is like. They point quite rightly that President Saddam used chemical weapons in Iran and also against the Kurds, but they show no appreciation of what that involves, particularly when used on a massive scale against an invading force. These things ought to be discussed more in the press."

"There is no valid comparison between the situation in the Gulf and that in Europe at the start of the World War II. Talk of appeasement completely misrepresents the situation. We have shown that we can deploy our forces in Gulf and are in a position to act if the worst comes to the worst. That was not the case in the Thirties when we faced Germany. I have noticed that they have stopped calling Saddam Hussein a Hitler. He hasn't got Hitler's industrial or power base. Far from conquering country after country, he has made a settlement with Iran, which they wanted."

"I don't believe that he is trying to conquer the whole of the Middle East. I fully understand anyone who wants to prevent the expanding of countries but it was this that got us into so many difficulties over the Suez Canal. I know that Anthony Eden was absolutely genuine in thinking that this was a repetition of what had happened in the Thirties. Then, we had similar accusations: that Nasser was a Hitler and he was so stupid he could never operate the canal. We were wrong on that. It is the same when we try to discredit President Saddam. It is very wrong. It is unjustifiable."

"More tension was created when Mrs. Thatcher started talking about reparations and war crimes. You can only have reparations and war crimes if you invade the whole country and succeed in capturing the leaders. That raised enormous suspicions that Britain and America wanted a war, or would have to have a war in order to deal with alleged war crimes and get reparations."

"I expect that the military objective of a war would be to destroy Iraq. A war is bound to extend into Iraqi territory. If Iraq was conquered then there would have to be an occupation and we should then find the whole of the Arab World against us. It would be a nightmare. It would create a political situation much worse than what we have already. Yes, the nightmare scenario would be to win a war against Iraq. Nightmare after nightmare." (The Independent).

'The middle is a dangerous place to be'

By Michael Patzel
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. officials are worried that the departure of Eduard A. Shevardnadze as Soviet foreign minister will slow progress in U.S.-Soviet relations and perhaps trigger further disintegration of the central government in Moscow.

"This is not a very nice Christmas present from Moscow," said one senior U.S. official who emerged last week from meetings at the State Department to discuss Shevardnadze's resignation, which sent shock waves through Moscow and Western capitals alike.

Despite public reassurances that the resignation won't change the course of superpower relations, there is private consternation among leading official analysts and more open concern expressed by experts outside the government.

John D. Steinbruner, a Soviet specialist and director of foreign

policy studies at the Brookings Institution, a private research group, called the move "a severe polarisation of the Soviet domestic situation."

Communist hardliners are pushing Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev to get tough with nationalists and radical reformers they accuse of trying to split the union. The Soviet president has threatened to use the KGB and police to restore order in the increasingly unstable environment aggravated by widespread food shortages and a breakdown in supply lines.

"You've got the radical intellectuals and nationalists on one side arguing sovereignty, and some conservatives arguing traditional crackdown, with Gorbachev there in the middle trying to preserve the union on reasonable terms," Steinbruner said.

"The middle is a dangerous place to be, and Shevardnadze is one of the few figures who can bring serious political credibility to that middle position."

If the foreign minister's resignation "proves to be an indication that this middle position is not viable, then that is an alarming sign," the Brookings scholar said.

A leading official analyst of Soviet and East European affairs, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said there is concern that this is going to add momentum to the disintegrative forces, a sign that they've now hit the central government and the government's basically just going to fall apart."

Shevardnadze was a party boss in his native Georgia and a neophyte in foreign affairs only six years ago. But he took a commanding position on the world stage by skilfully negotiating tactics in search of a new role as a dealmaker and an applicant for Soviet membership in the world community of nations.

His informal, personable style won the confidence of his like-

minded U.S. counterpart, Secretary of State James A. Baker who said Thursday, "I am proud to call this man a friend."

It will be difficult for any successor to regain that level of credibility and confidence.

The State Department source said U.S. officials had been tipped by the Soviets that Yevgeny Primakov, a Gorbachev adviser and foreign policy emissary, was in line to replace Shevardnadze if he were named prime minister or vice president in Gorbachev's promised government reorganisation.

Before Gorbachev brought him into the Kremlin, Primakov was director of one of several Soviet academic institutes on international affairs and specialised in the Arab World. He has made numerous visits to the United States.

"He doesn't like Americans — he never has and our judgment is he's not as intelligent," one State Department official said. "He doesn't have the intellectual

depth that Shevardnadze had, despite his academic credentials. He'll be a more difficult man to deal with."

The official acknowledged that the same might be said of practically anyone in Gorbachev's inner circle. Shevardnadze, perhaps even more than Gorbachev himself, was admired by his U.S. counterparts for his candid statements about past Soviet mistakes and his willingness to bargain for the sake of winning agreements on tough arms control issues.

"Shevardnadze had flexibility and enjoyed Gorbachev's confidence and felt able to improvise on the spot sometimes to solve problems," the analyst said, noting that are rare qualities in the history of Soviet foreign policy leadership.

Primakov, the source added, is "much more cautious and ponderous, a more bureaucratic figure" than Shevardnadze. Steinbruner disputed the con-

tention that Primakov is anti-America, but he acknowledged that no one in the Soviet hierarchy has Shevardnadze's credibility with Western leaders.

Ilya Prizel, a Soviet affairs specialist at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, took a more pessimistic view.

He suggested Gorbachev is following the course taken by the late Nikita S. Khrushchev, who, in the 1960s, said he faced a choice between reform and giving up his power base. Khrushchev chose to cement his power, Prizel said.

The Soviet leader eventually was overthrown in a palace coup carried out by his fellow Communist Party chieftains.

"It's a very depressing thing," Prizel said, citing a series of reformist Gorbachev aides and advisers who have left or been sidelined in recent months. "Gorbachev has outlived his ability to reform."

A war between bosses and employees in Tunisia

By Jonathan Wright
Reuters

TUNIS — Tunisian management and labour are squaring off for a fight over the country's 25-year-old labour laws, with the government caught in the middle as a reluctant and possibly biased referee.

The bosses say the legislation, passed in 1965 in the heyday of Tunisian socialism, is out of step with the harsh realities of the 1990s when companies face much sharper choices between competitiveness and bankruptcy.

Labour unions say they will never sign away workers' rights. They accuse managements of laying the groundwork for thousands of redundancies among loyal staff and being prepared to replace them with new workers held in check by short-term contracts.

The government says the labour laws are not inviolate. But, out of apparent fear of being seen to be moving too far too fast, it has not revealed amendments of its own to be debated alongside the employers' proposals.

The Businessmen's Federation, the UTICA, wants the legislation to define the concept of unjust dismissal more carefully, to widen the scope of what the law calls "grave professional faults" and to limit strictly the amount of compensation labour tribunals can award dismissed workers.

Another demand is for "flexibility of labour," a code word for formal recognition of management's right to take on workers for short periods to meet special orders.

UTICA President Hedi Jilani said in a recent interview: "The fact is that abuses, the irres-

possible behaviour of some (workers) has hardened the attitude of managers, who demand that everyone should share the risk, both employer and employee."

"Anyone who wants to work need not feel concerned. It's only the workshy who need laws to protect them. I can't understand why people keep repeating the old talk about the rights of workers without mentioning their duties," he added.

Ridha Azzabi, a member of the UTICA executive bureau, said some Tunisians seemed to think their salaries had nothing to do with working and preferred to play cards during work hours.

But Ismail Sabbani, president of the Trade Union Movement, UGTT, told a meeting of 500 union officials in mid-December that the calls for reform were unjustified.

"The draft we have seen is a great step backwards. We are ready for dialogue but we will reject any erosion of the gains of the workers," he told the UGTT National Council.

The bosses were exploiting the victory of capitalism in Eastern Europe to win concessions from Tunisian workers and their plan would create fear and instability and widen the gap between rich and poor, he said to cheers from delegates.

UGTT Spokesman Mohamad Trabelsi said management was seeking to make the workers the only scapegoats for low productivity in Tunisian industry, when in fact there were many causes.

Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali, in a major speech in November, seemed to take UTICA's side in the debate.

"We must reward effort and

distinguish between outstanding personnel, lazy workers and those who, taking advantage of acquired rights, refuse to make any effort," he said.

"We must revise our legislation in this direction so that the reward matches the work accomplished," he added.

Prime Minister Hamed Karoui told Parliament last week that the law could be reformed "in a progressive way" — a formula which could be seen as favourable to either side.

UTICA says that failure to reform the labour law would put in jeopardy the rest of the structural adjustment programme which the government adopted in 1986 to deal with serious deficits in both the budget and the balance of payments.

Under the programme the government has gradually liberalised imports, which exposes Tunisian companies to foreign competition, and relaxed internal price controls, which intensifies competition on the domestic market.

"You can't choose to have a liberal economy, open to foreign markets, and at the same time use laws and ideologies which are totally different. You have to know what you want. You can't want one thing and do the opposite," said UTICA's Azzabi.

But for the UGTT, which is just finding its feet as an independent force after years of subordination to the government, the labour law conflict has become a rallying point.

"We are going to defend the interests of the workers by all lawful means. But if we cannot agree, which is probable, we will have to consult the Tunisian people," said the UGTT spokesman.

General told the truth, but served other purposes

By Mike Feinsilber
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Army Lt. Gen. Calvin A.H. Waller was stating the simple truth when he said he will still be short of troops to start an offensive ground war against Iraq on Jan. 15, some former military leaders say.

But Waller, deputy commander of the U.S. military forces in the operation Desert Shield buildup, may have served other purposes as well.

One former government official says Waller may have been underscoring the military's deep misgivings about taking on an entrenched Iraqi army in Kuwait. In its eight-year war against Iran, Iraq largely stayed on the defensive and mowed down charging Iranians.

And the view was expressed in Washington that Waller relieved some of the pressure on President George Bush to act against Iraq if it hasn't withdrawn from Kuwait by the Jan. 15 deadline set by the United Nations. The U.N. resolution says military action may be taken if the deadline is not met.

Bush has created expectations by stressing that Iraq must "fully" withdraw by the U.N. deadline. Now Waller says it would be prudent to wait a month or more.

About 280,000 U.S. forces

have been sent to the Gulf region as part of the multinational military buildup there, and the U.S. contingent is expected to reach 430,000.

"There may be great machinations behind all this," said retired Lt.-Gen. William Odom, "but... it has long been clear to me that a March date was about all we could meet. To hear Waller say that comes as no surprise."

Odom is a former army chief of staff for intelligence who headed the intelligence-gathering national security agency during Ronald Reagan's presidency. Lawrence J. Korb, assistant secretary of defence for manpower in the Reagan administration said Waller, a former military assistant: "I think he was just telling the truth."

Robert Hunter, who was director of Middle East affairs on the national security council under Reagan, said Waller's remarks also may have reflected the military's misgivings about getting involved in what is bound to be a costly war.

And retired Army Col. Harry G. Summers, a fellow at the army war college, said Waller's comment made U.N. intentions all the more uncertain for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. "It clouds the issue and it should be cloudy," he said.

Waller last week said that if Bush wanted to attack Iraq after

Jan. 15, he would advise the president, Defence Secretary Dick Cheney and Gen. Colin Powell, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, "that until our full complement of forces are on the ground that we should not initiate hostile activities."

Even though Cheney said much the same thing, although less forcefully, the statement appeared to undercut Bush's strategy of steadily increasing pressure on Saddam.

White House Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater sought to brush it off Thursday, saying: "It never hurts to build in a little uncertainty about what our intentions are as it relates to Jan. 15."

"I never expected anybody to go to war in Jan. 16th," said Jack N. Merritt, a retired four-star general. "What I heard was a guy out in the field... whose subjective judgment was that he didn't think he had enough force to do what he was supposed to do."

Summers, author of a book critical of the military's strategy in Vietnam, said senior officers have taken pains not to be overly optimistic about warfare in the Gulf.

"The Defence Department has been very careful about not creating another credibility gap," he said, recalling Gen. Bruce Palmer's conclusion after Vietnam that the senior military's "can-do attitude" misled the White House.

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Qasem

(Continued from page 1)

to the Gulf crisis "should be conditional on a solution to Palestinian problem." At the same time, the minister said, "we do not understand why it is impossible to proceed into parallel peace processes."

Qasem underlined the irony that the Middle East is sliding towards war at a time when international detente has taken roots.

"Since we are living at a threshold of a new world order we would have hoped that this new world order would overflow to this part of the world," he said. Jordan was also optimistic that the "new world order" would herald peace and justice, fairness and evenhandedness and a sense of total commitment without selectivity to international legitimacy," he added.

Notwithstanding the language or the operative contents of United Nations resolutions, Qasem said, there cannot be any denial of the "organic link" between the Gulf crisis and the Palestinian problem. The minister was referring to Resolution 681, adopted last Thursday criticising Israeli practices against the Palestinian people but relegating reference to an international peace conference on the Middle East to an accompanying statement to accommodate American anxiety not to link the Gulf crisis

and the Palestinian problem. "In our assessment this is a watered-down resolution," he said adding that he could not see "anything positive" in it.

Cheney

(Continued from page 1)

promising U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia Saturday that they were part of a "don't screw around" force ready to smash an Iraqi military machine of over 510,000 men in and near Kuwait.

Cheney and General Colin Powell, chairman of the Pentagon Joint Chiefs of Staff, will report to Bush Monday on the readiness of American troops. They headed for Rome from Cairo.

Iraq's defence minister, Lieutenant-General Saadi Tuma Abbas, said Sunday that his country was ready to crush any military attack, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) said.

The agency said Abbas was responding to Cheney's comments.

"The U.S. defence minister and those who support him will see how the earth will be burned under their feet not only in Iraq but also in Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf countries," Abbas was quoted as saying.

Abbas said Mujahideen in Saudi Arabia would join in the fight against King "Fahd's treason in the eastern area of Saudi Arabia."

The Iraqis have appealed to Muslims worldwide to aid in their confrontation with the West, saying that King Fahd betrayed Islam by inviting foreign troops to defend help defend his country, home of the religions holiest shrines.

Agriculture

(Continued from page 1)

The government would settle only 50 per cent of the total dues on these farmers, who should pay the rest of the loans in instalments spread over long terms," he said.

The minister's proposals were referred to the House's Agricultural Committee for study and recommendations.

At the outset of the session, which was attended by Prime Minister Mudar Badran, and cabinet members, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Marwan Al Qasem presented a reply to queries submitted by Deputy Ahmad Abbadi about the transfers of employees at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and those retired on pension.

The minister told the House that the ministry based its transfers and retirements on the Civil Service Commission's law.

He asked the deputy to name those officials and employees in question so that he could be more specific in his reply.

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Seoul sees difficulties in N. Korea

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — An economic crisis may hit North Korea next year despite its frugality campaign aimed at overcoming food and energy shortages, a South Korean newspaper has reported.

The Joong-Ang daily news quoted intelligence sources as saying many ships and vehicles in the communist nation have been running low on fuel, showing the North's economic difficulties.

"North Korea's economy may be in a most critical stage in March next year because of food and energy shortages," a senior intelligence official was quoted as saying.

Intelligence sources said the Soviet Union, a major energy supplier to North Korea, has raised energy prices and replaced barter trade with cash transactions, causing further economic problems for the North, the paper reported.

The newspaper did not mention the nationality of the intelligence sources. In such cases, they normally refer to South Korean sources.

North Korea has launched an all-out frugality campaign, suspending operations of many factories, ships and nearly one-third of its military vehicles, it said.

A Soviet scholar told a seminar last week that North Korea's economy shrank by 5.3 per cent last year. He accused the North of heavy spending on defence and projects intended for propaganda value.

Official North Korean news reports have said military spending accounted for up to 12 per cent of the 1989 and 1990 government budgets. But Western military experts believe the North spends more on defence.

Tunisian olive oil output may rise to 1975 level

TUNIS (R) — Tunisia expects olive oil production in the current 1990-91 season to be 165,000 tonnes, the highest for 15 years and 50 per cent higher than 110,000 tonnes in 1989-90, the State Marketing Board has said.

The country expects to export 70,000 tonnes, compared with about 50,000 in the previous season, it said. Tunisia is the second largest exporter in the world after Spain.

The European Community buys 46,000 tonnes of Tunisian olive oil a year under an agreement renewed earlier this year.

Domestic consumption is about 40,000 tonnes a year so much of this season's production will have to be stockpiled.

The ministry of agriculture has raised producer prices for the season which opened on Nov. 1 by between 2.2 and 2.3 per cent, way below inflation at more than six per cent.

The producer price for the highest quality of oil has gone up to 1.75 dinars (\$2.12) a kilogramme from 1.71 dinars (\$2.08) and for the lowest grade to 1.39 dinars (\$1.69) from 1.36 dinars (\$1.65).

Chinese inflation begins to increase again

BEIJING (R) — China's inflation rate rose in November as slack market demand, bane of the national economy this year, began to expand.

The official Economic Information newspaper has said total retail sales in November increased by 10.3 per cent to 70.8 billion yuan (\$13.8 billion) over the same month a year ago.

That growth far outstripped the 1.1 per cent rise in sales seen in the first 11 months of this year over the same period in 1989.

"This is some of the best news that economy has had all year. Finally market demand may be expanding," said an Asian diplomat.

Slack market demand has meant slow industrial sales, stockpiles and falling profits for China's companies. For the government it has meant declining tax revenues and soaring bills for subsidies to the one-third of all state-run industries running at a loss.

"This is an unsophisticated

Asian bank may give Pakistan urgent aid

ISLAMABAD (R) — The Asian Development Bank (ADB) may provide emergency aid to Pakistan to help offset the crippling impact of the Gulf crisis on the nation's economy, an ADB official has said.

Official at the Manila headquarters of the bank are considering a Pakistani government request for loans to rescue the country's deteriorating balance of payments, the official told Reuters.

The assistance is likely to total between \$100 to \$200 million, he said. "Some balance of payments support is being considered with some stipulations," the official added.

Islamabad, the second largest recipient of ADB assistance, estimates the Gulf crisis will cost it more than \$2 billion over a year due to additional oil costs and the loss of trade and remittances from Pakistani workers who have fled the Gulf.

Its foreign exchange reserves were at a dangerously low level of 1.30 billion rupees (\$59 million), enough to cover only three days of imports, at the end of November.

Kuwaiti Ambassador Qasim Omar Al Yagout said recently his government, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates would probably lend Pakistan \$500 million to bolster its reserves. No agreement has been signed yet.

Report examines Gulf crisis impact on Asian economies

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) — The economies of developing countries in Asia that rely on imported oil have suffered from the Gulf crisis, a U.N. report has said.

However, Asia's oil-exporting countries have benefited from rises in fuel costs since Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait, and regional growth still averaged a healthy 5.1 per cent this year, the report added.

The year-end economic summary was prepared by S. Kibria, executive secretary of the Bangkok-based United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

It said many countries in the region had suffered a drop of one to two percentage points in their growth rates, but oil producers Brunei, Indonesia, Iran and Malaysia all registered higher growth.

According to U.N. figures, oil prices have increased 50 per cent since the Iraqi invasion. Many developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region also have suffered from a decline in exports to the Middle East and a loss of remittances from their nationals working there.

However, despite "global economic and political uncertainties," the region's overall performance was relatively strong in 1990, equalling that of last year, Kibria's report said.

The economies that slowed down included those of "high flying" countries that have to import oil.

Hong Kong and South Korea were exceptions, but between

1989 and 1990, expansion rates dropped from 7.1 per cent to five per cent in Taiwan and from 9.2 per cent to 8.5 per cent in Singapore, the report said.

Thailand and the Philippines suffered even bigger falls — almost three percentage points each — although Thailand still managed to retain the highest regional growth rate this year, 9.6 per cent.

Thailand was able to cope with the Gulf crisis better than other countries. The Philippines, meanwhile, had to face painful structural adjustments to reduce its huge foreign debt. Kibria's report said its 1990 growth rate was projected at 3.3 per cent.

In China, austerity measures succeeded in curbing inflation, but also lowered growth from 3.9 per cent last year to 3.5 per cent this year, it said.

South Asian countries enjoyed healthy growth because good weather had increased agricultural output, the report said.

India's economy was estimated to be growing by five per cent, Pakistan's by 5.2 per cent and Bangladesh's by 5.8 per cent this year. Sri Lanka, after three successive years of slow growth

averaging 2.5 per cent, expanded to 4.9 per cent in 1990, it said.

The region's least developed and Pacific island countries continued to fare badly as in previous years and their economies remained weak and unstable, the report said.

"In addition to rampant inflation, resources constraint and diminishing external assistance, they were the most affected by the high cost in imported energy," the report said.

Many countries faced double-digit inflation, and the export growth rate for the region fell from 11.6 per cent to 9.9 per cent this year. Many governments were forced to cut public spending to narrow their budget deficits, it said.

Such cuts deprived policymakers of "an instrument for providing the economy with an expansionary stimulus," and came at the expense of essential education, health and other basic programmes, the report said.

Part from the Middle East crisis, another factor that could jeopardise regional economies was the deadlock in the Uruguay Round talks under the General Agreement on Tariffs and

Trade, Kibria's report said. He said that if the world became embroiled in "costly and bitter trade wars and formation of rival trade blocs," the worst victims would be Asia's developing countries.

Kibria said agriculture in the region had suffered a downturn in 1989-90 because of changes in climate and a fall in the price of commodities, especially coconut oil, coffee, palm oil, rice, rubber and shrimp.

He said overall, the growth in agricultural output had fallen to 3.5 per cent.

In Thailand, production would decrease two percentage points in 1990 after growth figures of 10.2 per cent in 1988 and 6.3 per cent in 1989. The decline was caused by a 13.7 per cent fall in rice production and a 16.8 per cent fall in that of maize, Kibria's report said.

In industry, Kibria said China's fiscal and credit policies had reduced its industrial growth from 20.8 per cent in 1988 to 8.3 per cent in 1989. It was expected to be around six per cent in 1990.

In South Korea, export growth was just three per cent in 1989 compared with 29 per cent the previous year, the report said.

Reforming East Europeans face increased pressure, OECD says

PARIS (R) — The short-term outlook is bleak for East European countries trying under immense social and financial pressures to switch to market economies, the OECD has said.

Eastern Europe is one of the areas worst hit by the rise in oil prices following Iraq's takeover of Kuwait, the economic forum of 24 industrial nations said in its half-yearly outlook.

"The slowdown in the world economy, the rise in interest rates and, in particular, higher oil prices make for a more difficult economic environment in which to pursue the sort of restructuring on which these countries are now embarked," the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said.

Several East European countries have begun reforms, cutting budget deficits, restoring monetary control, raising efficiency through prices, and liberalising

imports. "Nonetheless, it is clear that effective transformation is very much a medium-term process. Output declined in all these countries in 1990 and is likely, at best, to stabilise in 1991, while inflation remains a widespread problem," the OECD said.

Output fell in 1990 by as much as 15 to 20 per cent in Poland and Romania, but only by one per cent in Czechoslovakia, where the pace of reform has been slower, it said.

In the Soviet Union reforms have not yet been agreed, let alone implemented. Output is falling and inflation is accelerating. A fall in oil production is offsetting the benefits of higher oil prices for Moscow.

The trade balance of eastern Europe, excluding the Soviet Union, will be hit by changes next year in the Soviet-led trade bloc Comecon, which will introduce trade at world prices in

hard currency instead of barter involving subsidised Soviet energy and raw materials for East European manufactured goods.

The impact of these factors, with the rise in oil prices, will lead to a deterioration in eastern Europe's overall trade balance of more than \$9 billion, the OECD said.

Of more than \$9 billion, the OECD said.

Soviet subsidies on East European energy imports alone were worth some \$3.5 billion in 1988. The impact on individual East European countries of these changes ranges from four per cent of Bulgaria's gross national product (GNP), to less than one per cent for Poland, a sizeable domestic goal producer, the OECD said.

The report said OECD members could help the reforms by keeping their markets open to East European exports.

Dealers expect Japanese to brake gold price fall

TOKYO (R) — Gold prices will drop if there is a peaceful settlement of the Gulf crisis but Japanese bargain-hunters will quickly limit the fall, Tokyo precious metals dealers and analysts have said.

"Many dealers are afraid gold will plummet when the Gulf situation is settled," said Yukuji Sonoda, president of the Samiho gold company.

"Well, it may not exactly free-

rise to how far it will fall, and at what point Japanese buying kicks in," he said.

Local investors are more concerned with the fluctuating dollar/yen rate and the threat of recession looming across most of the industrialised world than war fears, dealers said.

"Even if shooting starts and gold goes up, we are looking at a recession and a falling dollar after the shooting, and both are bad for gold," one brokerage analyst said. "Gold will drop to

around \$340 to \$350 after everything is settled."

Hideo Kamei, director of major Japanese dealer Tanaka Kikinzoku Kogyo and general manager of its precious metals division, said he would not be surprised by a drop to \$350 or below.

But Kamei said Japanese demand would surge when gold fell below 1,500 yen per gramme. "It would be the lowest price in Japan in 11 or 12 years," he said. "Investment demand will skyrocket."

Taking into account dealing and other costs, at an exchange rate of 130 yen per dollar that would be \$350 per ounce. At 125 yen that would be \$365.

Most analysts and dealers put the bottom at \$350, but the question of what happens afterwards gives rise to a greater range of opinions.

Pessimists saw gold fluctuating between \$350 and \$360 on the fear of recession and slack demand.

"There are no bullish incentives for gold," another brokerage dealer said. "Most of the industrialised world is in or about to be in a recession. And if production falls in South Africa, North America will make up for it."

Surprising French trade data points to domestic showdown

PARIS (R) — France has reported an unexpectedly small November trade deficit of 601 million French francs (\$117 million) which independent economists said was more a reflection of a domestic economic slowdown than a lack of French competitiveness in world markets.

The provisional November figure compared with October's

6.69 billion franc (\$1.3 billion) shortfall. Economists had expected a figure of around six billion (\$1.2 billion).

"Half of this improvement is erratic. The deficit will be up again in December. But it is also confirmation of a pronounced slowdown," said Christopher Potts, economist at Banque Indosuez.

He said the figures pointed to

destocking in the corporate sector, and noted there had been a sharp drop in business confidence since the summer when firms had been over-optimistic.

The deficit on industrial goods shrank to just 181 million francs (\$35.2 million) in November from 4.29 billion francs (\$834.6 million) in October, the figures released by French customs show.

AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES

Sunday, December 23, 1990					
Central Bank official rates					
	Buy	Sell			
U.S. dollar	664.0	668.0	Japanese yen (for 100)	489.9	492.8
Pound Sterling	1252.3	1259.8	Dutch guilder	385.0	387.3
Deutschmark	433.6	436.2	Swedish crown	116.2	116.9
Swiss franc	506.2	509.2	Italian lira (for 100)	57.8	58.1
French franc	127.8	128.6	Belgian franc (for 10)	210.0	211.3

BESTSELLER '91

- 1 - Hussein of Jordan.
- 2 - Saddam Hussein a Biography.
- 3 - By Way of Deception.
- 4 - The Macmillan Encyclopedia.
- 5 - Guinness Book of Records 1991.
- 6 - Palestinian costumes.
- 7 - High Above Jordan.
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ANNOUNCEMENT

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مكتبة عين النخيل

Gorbachev threatens Republic of Moldova after KGB warning

MOSCOW (R) — President Mikhail Gorbachev has given the southern Soviet Republic of Moldova 10 days to take measures to resolve its ethnic disputes.

The ultimatum followed a stern warning from the KGB security police Saturday that ethnic divisions could tear the Soviet Union apart and were being exploited by foreign intelligence services.

A presidential decree, published by the Soviet News Agency (TASS), ordered concessions by all sides in the conflict in Moldova, where at least three people were killed in October. The decree dissolved two self-styled breakaway republics within Moldova — proclaimed by the Turkish-speaking Gagauz and the Russian-speaking Dnestr regions.

"The leadership of the republic must inform the president within 10 days about the measures taken to bring Moldova out of the critical situation," it said.

"In the event of this decree not being respected, necessary steps will be taken in accordance with the authority granted to the USSR president by the constitution."

Gorbachev, suspected by liberal critics of caving in to pressure from hardliners in the Communist Party and army, has the power to introduce presidential rule or send in troops to prevent violence.

But the decree did offer some concessions, including an order that the Moldovan parliament should reconsider legislation viewed as discriminatory by the minorities, including laws promoting the Romanian language.

Most people in Moldova, known as Moldavia until it declared sovereignty earlier this year, speak Romanian. The republic was formed in 1940, largely from territory annexed from Romania under the terms of a Nazi-Soviet pact.

Gorbachev said the republic's denunciation of the pact, which

also led to the incorporation of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia into the Soviet Union, was invalid.

The Soviet leader's decree could foreshadow similar tough action against the three rebellious Baltic republics.

Baltic leaders fear a crackdown by the Soviet army and KGB following recent hard-line statements by KGB chief Vladimir Kryuchkov and Defence Minister Dmitry Yazov.

Lithuanian leader Vytautas Landsbergis told a meeting of the pro-independence Sajudis Movement in the republican capital of Vilnius Saturday that "resistance and self-defence measures" were required to prepare for presidential rule.

"There are signs that rule of this kind has already been introduced surreptitiously," he said.

In Moscow, Kryuchkov told the full Soviet parliament, debating new powers for Gorbachev, that ethnic conflict was the most serious problem facing

the country and tough action was needed to guard against fresh violence and bloodshed.

"When only sermons are used to stop violence and cruelty and when every citizen suffers from the absence of firmness and consistency, such democracy is worthless," he said.

Boris Yeltsin, president of the Russian Federation, told reporters at parliament that Gorbachev might become more authoritarian towards republics seeking greater autonomy.

"I think he will suppress the republics a little, their sovereignty, make them repeal some of their laws," he said.

Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov said parliament's refusal of new presidential powers would be a serious political defeat for Gorbachev.

He criticised the proposed new power structures, which gave the president ultimate authority but allow for a greater say by the republics in decision-making.

Cambodians fail to endorse U.N. plan

PARIS (R) — Cambodia's four warring factions Sunday failed to endorse an ambitious U.N. peace plan but there were signs of hope in their agreement to talk again and an apparent softening in the stance of the Phnom Penh government.

"We have advanced on the path which should lead to a return to peace in Cambodia," French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas told a news conference held with his Indonesian counterpart, Ali Alatas, at the end of two days of tough talks in Paris.

The factions heard repeated warnings that the world's patience was wearing thin over their failure to stop squabbling and endorse the U.N. plan to end more than a decade of civil war in Cambodia.

The plan calls for U.N. administrators and peacekeeping troops to oversee a ceasefire and elections.

Britain, one of five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council which drafted the plan, made official contact with Phnom Penh Saturday for the first time since 1979 to urge it to endorse the scheme.

A senior Foreign Office official flew to Paris to deliver the warning to the Vietnamese-backed government of Prime Minister Hun Sen.

"I told them this offer may not be an offer much longer from the international community," the envoy, David Colvin, head of the Foreign Office's South East Asia Department.

"If they are perceived as shooting this down their isolation will continue," he added.

Hun Sen's administration has lacked international recognition since it was installed by Vietnamese troops invading Cambodia 12 years ago.

The three guerrilla movements have already announced their acceptance of the U.N. blueprint.

Britain's tough statement followed similar warnings from France and Indonesia, the co-chairmen of the talks this weekend aimed at winning endorsement of the U.N. peace plan.

"The world is changing rapidly, the world is caught in turmoil," Alatas told reporters. "There will be other questions that will demand our attention," he warned in an apparent reference to the Gulf and chaos in the Soviet Union.

Colvin said Britain wanted Phnom Penh and its three foes to reach full agreement on the U.N. plan next month.

Dumas said he hoped to reconvene a 19-nation Paris peace conference on Cambodia in the first quarter of 1991 to give the plan a final go-ahead.

Dumas expressed satisfaction that the U.N. peace initiative had survived this weekend's meeting, but he conceded that "the next phase will be difficult."

After two days of talks, Hun Sen, 39, eventually agreed to a further round of negotiations, but he raised major objections that are likely to cause new headaches for negotiators.

Campus clashes threaten Bangladesh student unity

DHAKA (R) — At least 12 people were injured when rival students set dormitories on fire and fought running battles with home-made bombs and rocks at Dhaka University, witnesses said Sunday.

The Saturday between groups supported by the All Party Students Union (APSU) and the Islamic Chhatra Shibir Students. More than 150 teachers and students were injured.

As the news of the Chittagong incident reached Dhaka University, angry APSU supporters turned on Shibir followers and set fire to about 25 of their rooms.

At least 12 Shibir students were injured in the fighting Saturday night and Sunday.

APSU leaders accused Shibir,

the student wing of the rightist Jamaat E-Islami Party, of trying to create a state of anarchy ahead of the parliamentary elections due on Feb. 27.

Authorities Saturday closed the Dhaka City College after armed people stormed into the principal's office and threatened to kill him. Police say they are investigating the case.

Analysts say the unrest could spread to other cities and split the students, who had become a major force against ousted President Hossain Mohammad Ershad.

Ershad stepped down on Dec. 6 following a violent campaign by 22 opposition parties, students and professional groups.

French Communist Party reelects Marchais as leader

SAINT-OUEN, France (AP) — Georges Marchais was overwhelmingly reelected secretary-general of France's Communist Party, prevailing over vigorous dissension in party ranks.

The five-day congress in this working-class suburb north of Paris was the party's first since the dramatic collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

Marchais' reelection, in which he received 99 per cent of the delegates' votes, effectively quashed calls for major overhauls of his policies.

Party congresses are held every three years and are the highest forum for setting party policy. This year's meeting came on the 70th anniversary of the par-

ty's founding and at a time when Marchais was facing increased calls for reform.

The Communists hold 26 of the 557 seats in the National Assembly, down from 35 in 1986 and 44 in 1988.

Membership has plunged in the affiliated union General Confederation of Labour, from 16 million in 1977 to 4 million. The party claims it has 600,000 members, but drew less than 10 per cent of the vote in recent elections.

Critics of the 70-year-old Marchais, who has led the Communists since 1972, say he controls the party in a tight, undemocratic way, and has not drawn lessons from the failed Communist regimes of Eastern Europe.

France claims war reparation from Germany

BERLIN (AP) — France is asking Germany for reparations from World War II, a newspaper has reported.

An official confirmed the report, and said the October unification of the two Germanys gives the united country the burden of war damaged that East Germany balked at paying, and other obligations of the now-defunct Communist country.

In Paris, an authorised source who would not be further identified also confirmed discussions that were under way but stressed that they involved claims from private citizens, not French governmental claims.

Die Welt newspaper quoted reliable sources saying French diplomats had spoken several times with the Foreign Ministry in Bonn about the issue and the French embassy there had sent two notes to the ministry.

A ministry spokesman, who refused to be identified by name, said the issue was a "normal occurrence after unification, about which there must be negotiations." France had previously been in contact with East Germany about reparations, he said, without giving details.

The Die Welt report said France had put its claim in the currencies of 1945: 37.6 billion French francs and 261 billion reichsmarks, the currency of

Nazi Germany.

Asked how the claims would be converted into today's money, the spokesman said it was a technical question for negotiators.

In the West German currency reform of 1948, 10 reichsmarks were converted to 1 mark. At that rate, the German currency part of the French claim would be set at 26.1 billion marks, today worth about \$17 billion. The French currency also has been reformed since the war — data on its conversion were not available.

The spokesman said there would be talks early next year about the issue.

After the war the big four allies — the United States, France, Britain and the Soviet Union — assessed reparations against Germany to be paid in assets and capital goods. But Germany was economically prostrate and collection of reparations was uneven.

In the mid-1980s West Germany agreed to pay damages to some French people who did forced labour or were drafted into the German military.

Germany is paying reparations to Israel and individual Jews. That sum so far has totalled about 80 billion marks, about \$53 billion at today's exchange rates.

Indian troops kill 5 in bus attack

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Soldiers fired on two buses in the Kashmir Valley, killing five passengers and wounding about ten others, police and witnesses said Sunday.

There was no immediate explanation for the Saturday shooting, but witnesses noted that Muslim militants had attacked army troops in the same area Friday.

One soldier was killed in Friday's attack, according to

sources who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The two buses were fired on about 10 kilometres west of Srinagar on the road linking Baramulla and Uri, according to police in Srinagar and residents of the area. All spoke on condition of anonymity.

Police and residents said three people died at the scene. Two more people died Sunday of their wounds, the residents said.

Srinagar newspapers, including the leading Urdu-language Al Safa, said eight people were killed at the scene, but there was no confirmation of these reports.

At least 1,692 people have been killed in Kashmir since Jan. 20 when the Indian government launched a crackdown on an increasingly violent secessionist movement by Muslim rebels. Most of the victims have been Muslim militants and their supporters.

U.N. votes to dissolve trusteeship of islands

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The Security Council voted overwhelmingly Saturday to dissolve the 43-year-old U.N. trusteeship over the strategic Northern Marianas, Marshall Islands and Micronesia.

The vote was 14-1. Only Cuba opposed the decision, arguing that not enough consideration had been devoted to the question, noting also objections by some residents of the Pacific Ocean islands who wanted the trusteeship to continue.

The Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands have pressed for termination so that their governments would become more independent and gain worldwide diplomatic recognition, especially from Great Britain and Europe. The two semi-independent nations have diplomatic ties with several South Pacific countries and China.

The termination agreement leaves Palau as the remaining entity under U.N. trusteeship and the Council expressed hope that the people of Palau will "in due course complete the process of freely exercising their right to self-determination."

The Marianas, Marshalls and Micronesia have various forms of semi-independence, in association with the United States.

For decades, Moscow had claimed that the United States' bullied the Pacific trust territories into doing its bidding by giving them special economic favours in exchange for maintaining the rights to military bases and ranges.

The Trusteeship Council members — the United States, Britain, France, China and the Soviet Union — also are permanent members of the Security Council, with veto power.

Slovenes vote on independence

BELGRADE (AP) — Slovenes went to the poll Sunday to decide whether to opt for independence from Yugoslavia, while voters in Communist-ruled Serbia and Montenegro were participating in second-round elections on who will govern them.

Polls opened at 7 a.m. (0600 GMT) in all three republics and voting was to continue until 7 p.m. (1800 GMT). Official results in Slovenia were expected Monday, while results in the other republics will be known by Tuesday, election officials said.

The outcome of the voting may be decisive for the survival of Yugoslavia, a federation of six republics representing a patchwork of often-antagonistic ethnic groups.

A public poll suggested Slovene secessionists will carry the day.

More than 90 per cent of

voters in the country's northern and most affluent region will likely opt for possible secession from the federation, according to poll results published late last week by Ljubljana's newspaper.

The centre-right coalition that has governed the state since last spring, when it ousted ruling Communists in Yugoslavia's first free elections, says an unequivocal "yes" for independence is needed. That would strengthen Slovenia's position in expected negotiations on the future makeup of Yugoslavia.

"On Sunday we must decide whether we wish to assume responsibility for our future," said Slovenia's president, Milan Kucan, in a televised statement late Friday.

Slovenia and neighbouring Croatia favour turning Yugoslavia into a loose confederation of near-independent nations. This is vehemently opposed by the

country's largest republic of Serbia, which advocates a centralised federation.

Slovene authorities have promised that their state, which borders Italy and Austria, will secede from Yugoslavia if the confederal plan is not accepted by the rest of the country.

But the headline leadership of Serbia, where ruling Communists overwhelmingly won the first electoral round two weeks ago, has threatened it would not respect existing state boundaries in the event both Slovenia or Croatia declared their independence.

Serbia's authoritarian president, Slobodan Milosevic, and his renamed Communists — the Socialist Party — captured 97 of the 250 parliamentary seats in the first round, with none going to any of the three major opposition parties.

Sri Lankans injured to Tamil war

COLOMBO (R) — After battling Tamil guerrillas for more than six months, the government says victory is a matter of time. The rebels seem equally confident of winning.

But in Colombo, the capital of this tropical island, people are becoming injured to the fighting, and some say the government's battle reports are like reading a daily score card.

"Who cares what happens in the north and the east? Our daily battle is here — rustling up a square meal for our families," said Sunil Jayasinghe, a Sinhalese taxi driver.

For most of the country, the 3,750 guerrillas, troops and civilians who have been killed since a fresh round of fighting started on June 11 are little more than a statistic to be added to the 11,000 people killed in earlier rounds of the separatist war that started in 1983.

The government controls a few vital military installations in the north and a large part of the eastern sector of the island. The rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, rule over vast tracts of jungles in the two districts where they are fighting to set up an independent homeland for their ethnic minority.

The deadlock is evident: neither side is willing to make concessions. Both claim victory is in sight.

"We are right on top of the situation. The LTTE is cornered in the north and is being mopped up in the east," said Deputy Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne. "It is now a matter of time before we finish them off," he said.

The Tamil Tigers think otherwise.

"We are now on the offensive. All military camps in the north and the east have become vulnerable. We are going from strength to strength," said Lawrence Thilaker, a top rebel leader.

Although the war pitting the

mostly Hindu Tamils against the mostly Buddhist Sinhalese-dominated government is seven years old, dissatisfaction among the minority Tamil against the majority Sinhalese goes back more than 40 years.

The government that was elected after Sri Lanka won independence from Britain in 1949 was predominantly Sinhalese. In 1956 the government made Sinhalese the national language and Buddhism the state religion.

Tamils form 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 16 million people and most of them live in the north and the east. Sinhalese form 75 per cent of the population and live in the southern and central districts.

Simmering animosities boiled over into an ethnic war in 1983 when Tamil militants killed 13 Sinhalese soldiers with a land mine in the north. Sinhalese rioted in Colombo, killing scores of Tamils and burning their shops and homes.

Following the riots, Tamil militants, who had banded themselves in several groups, took to the jungles and began their war for independence. There have been only two brief periods of peace.

The first was three years ago when neighbouring India brokered a peace accord that called for the rebels to lay down arms. All groups abided by the pact in June 1987, but three months later the Tamil Tigers reneged on the accord and restarted the war.

The Tigers and the government also called a ceasefire in May 1989 while they negotiated peace. But the talks broke down last June, starting the bloodiest round of fighting yet.

"We are willing to talk to the LTTE. They are our citizens, but first they must surrender their weapons. We will not be fooled a second time," said Wijeratne.

The rebels flatly refuse.

"Although we are getting stron-

ger militarily every day, we have not closed the door to negotiations. But there is absolutely no question of surrendering our arms. The Sinhalese have fooled the Tamils for 40 years. Not any more," Thilaker said.

The war has heaped economic disasters on this once-idyllic Indian Ocean island, known for its jewels, spices and sunny beaches.

The government's defence spending soared to \$185 million this year, an increase of 50 per cent over last year, depriving the country of much needed development funds.

Sri Lanka's military has now grown to 50,000 men from 12,000 in 1984 and is expected to reach 100,000 in 1992.

At least 30 more soldiers and Tamil rebels were killed on the third day of a government offensive spurred by the death of a senior army commander, military officials said Sunday.

Government planes pounded a rebel camp at Telipalai in the northern Jaffna peninsula Saturday, killing 17 rebels, the officials said.

The Tamil rebels later killed nine soldiers during the army's attempt to overrun the camp, according to the military officials, who cannot be identified by name under briefing rules.

The Jaffna peninsula, 300 kilometres northeast of Colombo, is the Tigers' biggest stronghold.

The rebels killed four other soldiers, including a captain, in an ambush Saturday at Wel Oya in the Trincomalee district, about 225 kilometres northeast of Colombo.

The government's latest offensive in the 7½-year-old war with the Tamil guerrillas followed Wednesday's killing of Brig. Lucky Wijeratne.

Wijeratne, whose jeep was blown up by a land mine, was the most senior officer killed in the Tamil revolt.

Democracy fails to provide food or fuel for winter

TIMISOARA, Romania (AP) — Romanians and Bulgarians, whose farms once fed Eastern Europe, welcome freedom after decades of Communist oppression but think more about getting enough food and fuel for the winter.

They had hoped economic hard times would end with the downfall of their old regimes a year ago, but it hasn't happened. "We need food and clothes," said Livia Hosszu of Timisoara. "You can't eat democracy."

In Romania, food production has declined 20 per cent since Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was overthrown and executed a year ago. Less is being exported, but much finds its way to the high-priced black market.

Only 120 tonnes of meat was left in Bulgaria's main warehouse by mid-December. Sofia alone normally needs 7,000 tonnes a month. Sugar, cooking oil and potatoes also were scarce or unavailable and energy was rationed.

After Ceausescu and Todo Zhivkov of Bulgaria were ousted, new governments were chosen in free elections with mandates for economic reform. They promised a break with the old, inefficient economies and a taste of the free-market policies that made Western Europe prosperous. But opponents complained that the new governments were dominated by former Communists.

Bulgarians lived relatively well on the food and energy bought by Zhivkov's liberalising policies, so this has been the worst winter ever for many.

Months of political bickering between a weak government and divided opposition prevented action on measures to improve living standards.

Shelves in food stores usually are empty. Bulgaria stopped making payments months ago on a foreign debt of more than \$10 billion and is strapped for cash to import energy.

"If I could choose, I'd choose to live in a country where there is maybe less democracy but more goods," said Marina Popova, 27, who spends much of her time in a stuffy kitchen-living room with her husband, 3-year-old child and in-laws.

"We don't have enough wood to heat the whole house, and that's why during the day we all live in one room," she told a visitor to Kalugerovo, her village 130 kilometres southeast of Sofia.

Little was for sale in the village store except for cheese, packets of rice and cans of fish. A supply van that used to come fully loaded three times a week now makes sporadic deliveries, said the store manager, who would not give her name.

"It may have been bad while Zhivkov was in power, but at least our shop was full," she said.

Another resident, Sotzyanka

Sirakova, said life gets "worse and worse" in Bulgaria.

Meat has been unavailable for four months and cooking oil for three, she said, in a shabby room she shares with her husband, Mrs. Sirakova, 52, is an unemployed cleaning woman.

Romanians suffered severely during the last decade of Ceausescu's rule, when he exported most of the country's food and raw materials to pay off the foreign debt.

A sense of betrayal by the subsequent government is particularly strong in the western city of Timisoara, 480 kilometres from Bucharest, where the uprising against the dictator began last December.

"The sacrifice was for nothing," Anna Kis said of the unfulfilled promise of better times.

Mrs. Kis, a 42-year-old widow, and Ms. Hosszu, 52, were interviewed after a four-hour shopping tour in Giroc, the working class district where some of the first protests occurred.

Many people spend hours each day foraging for necessities. More than 100 people waited outside a butcher shop for gristly, unidentifiable cuts of meat. The two women said food rationing, normal under Ceausescu, had been introduced again in Timisoara.

They said monthly limits per person were two kilograms of sugar, one kilogramme of oil, 15

eggs, 300 grammes of butter, 1.5 kilograms of flour and one chicken.

When asked what she had bought, Mrs. Kis pulled a chunk of lard and a garlic clove from a battered jute sack.

"I wanted some salami or ham," she said. "I also couldn't find any butter, eggs, flour or rice. You've got a ration card, but no food."

Where food is concerned, she said, there is no difference between Ceausescu and President Ion Iliescu, who was elected in May. Iliescu is under increasing pressure to resign, in part because of the dismal economic picture.

Many basic items of clothing are unavailable and others are too expensive, said Mrs. Kis, who earns 2,800 lei (\$80) a month. She said shoes that cost 350 lei a year ago now sell for 1,500 lei, if they can be found at the official price.

Even on the black market, you can't get what you want much of the time, and things are three times as expensive as in state shops," she said.

Homes are warm in Giroc. Mrs. Kis said, but the people worry about a fuel shortage.

In the nearby village of Carpinis, nothing but piles of coal dust remain in the fuel depot. "Only those who know the right people stay warm and fed," said Magdalena Wambach, the village teacher. "It's just like under Ceausescu."

COLUMN

Spanish lottery winners celebrate

MADRID (AP) — Jubilant workers in Valencia shut down early and residents of a Madrid suburb flocked into the streets to celebrate winning part of a \$1.1 billion Christmas lottery billed as the world's richest. They were among the lucky Spaniards who shared "El Gordo" (the fat one), the top prize that paid 250 million pesetas (\$2.63 million) to each of 90 tickets bearing the number 32522. Since each of the 90 tickets cost 25,000 pesetas (\$263), most were split among families, friends, club members and co-workers. Once somebody buys a ticket, he or she can divide it into as many shares as he wants by simply signing a piece of paper. El Gordo rained new wealth on residents of cities and towns in Madrid, Cuenca and Valencia. But thousands more Spaniards won other substantial prizes in the annual drawing. About 10 billion pesetas (\$105 million) were spread around the lower-middle-class suburb of Alcorcon, 35 kilometres southwest of the capital. Police said extra units had been called to control traffic as winners began a street party near the outlet which sold the tickets. "You can imagine what it's like with everyone in the street," said a municipal policeman. "Since the prize was well distributed, practically every body is having a private party."

Mother charged with giving cocaine to daughter

WILMINGTON, Delaware (AP) — A woman was arrested for giving her 2-year-old daughter cocaine on at least two occasions. Police said they found Maryland Brown's daughter under the influence of cocaine Wednesday when they showed up at Brown's home to arrest her for allegedly giving it to the girl before. Ms. Brown, 22, was charged with two counts of first-degree reckless endangering and two counts of delivering cocaine. The girl was hospitalized, but officials declined to give her name or condition. The investigation had begun last week when the girl was treated at a hospital for cocaine withdrawal, police Sgt. Martin P. Hageman said. Ivory L. Johnson, director of the state division of Child Protective Services, said the child was released from the hospital into a relative's custody while police investigated her mother. "Detectives obtained enough evidence to arrest her and upon returning to the suspect's home, discovered the child had been returned to the mother," Hageman said. Ms. Brown was held at the Women's Correctional Institution in Claymont in Lieu of \$11,000 bail.

Wife of Yorkshire ripper loses libel suit

LONDON (R) — The wife of the "Yorkshire ripper" mass murderer lost a libel suit against a British newspaper that said she had an affair with a Greek who looked like her husband. The high court in London ordered Sonia Sutcliffe to